

# Once Upon A CURSE

by Q-A the Authoress

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Summary: Once Upon A Time, a boy born of late 1700s nobility was cursed. Two-hundred years later, a girl living not-so Happily Ever After found him. When they unite, discoveries will be made surrounding not only themselves, but a dark secret feeding on their sleepy fishing village... even if someone else wishes for that book to remain closed: Permanently-Modern Scotland AU

## 1. Diary of a Beastly Prince

**Q-A The Authoress:** So. This is my first story in the \_How to Train Your Dragon\_ category and I must admit I'm very excited to be writing this. From reading a ton of beast/beauty stories out there I'm really hoping this one turns out well. This isn't my first AU story but this is one that didn't belong to someone else before hand so this is pretty much my brainchild so treat it kindly guys with as much constructive criticism as you can. ^-^

**Disclaimer:** I own none of the characters. It belongs to \_DreamWorks\_ and the fantastic writer \_Cressida Cowell\_. \_Support them all guys 'cause I'm sure all of us would like to see a trilogy out of the films or even more if we demand it. Who knows?

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Diary of a Beastly Prince<strong>

\_August 22\_\_nd,\_\_ 1810~\_

'\_Sometimes the reason we start out the way we are is so we can discover how to be something entirely different.'\_

\_Those were the words my mother soothingly whispered in my ear after my father scold me. It would be years, and years later until I understood the double meaning behind those words. \_

\_I was never a rebellious child whilst growing up. I was simply never allowed to go outside. 'Stay indoors, Son.' 'Never go outside, son.' It was always the same. Of course you should think I had no real incentive as to wanting to leave a castle with a \_striking \_courtyard in the center, or the tomes of books down in the South Wing. I would have to be mad enough for wanting to leaveâ€|\_

\_Please note the mockery that I was penned for that last line.

\_

\_While I do not unnecessarily resent living here I still wish I had some liberty at least. The freedom to run outside and play were one of the many wishes never granted to me. Despite that my parents do everything in their power for me to be happy. Or at least look and sound like I am happy. When you are the heir of an ancient and most influential clan and the son of the village's leader you get just about anythingâ€| all except what you truly want. But all inner conflictions aside, I DO know the reason behind their worried glances and dismayed expressions. \_

\_I had always thought when I was younger it had something to do with my inelegant skills and awkward form. I am not anywhere near the fighter my father is. Even lifting the lightest of swords dragged most of my upper body weight to the ground. I never blamed Mother for this, for I was born prematurely than most infants on the cold 29\_\_th\_\_ of February. It would actually be considered a miracle I even lived that long after since a maid tried to kill me with a book laying near my crib. Her motivations behind it and the more abnormal whims of my parents led to me asking them one question when I was of an age to retain that memory. \_

'\_Why must I be indoors when sundown approaches? Even when in the courtyard I must be sent straight to my room?' \_

\_I hear a rap at the door. Mother is calling me to supper. I must take flight! If I did not make haste it would be rude to keep the Lady waiting. \_

\* \* \*

><p><em>August 23<em>\_rd,\_\_1810~\_

\_O' how time passes \_swiftly\_ here in my lowly tower, the hours are eaten away in a mere instant. Note once again the cynical tone I had just penned. I was sent into my room for most of the day as Father had guests arrive at the castle. Perhaps 'guests' is too strong of a word and uninvited shrews would be the more precise words of choice. They were inexplicably rude to father according to what Mother told me not too long ago. I would not have known unless she had told me, you see. I was stuck up here in my tower. My mind wanders into thinking of a dangerous thought. Would it be considered precocious of me to climb down the ivory vines to make my escape? \_

\_Probably not. Those vines would not hold me even with my thin waist.

\_

\_Again my mind fails me when I have yet kept my promise from the previous night. I was to tell you more of what had happened that one night when I was nearing my fifth year. \_

\_We all sat around the grand fireplace with me sitting upon my mother's lap and father sitting opposite on his big sturdy leather chair. I had asked both my parents the infamous question that nearly petrified them on the spot. Poor things.\_

\_My mother was the first to recover as she spoke in her tone only reserved for me. Or at least she tried to sound like that, her voice sounded thickly as her eyes were threatening to bulge out of their sockets. "W-what has made you ask such a question, son?"\_

"\_I can't go outside and I wanna go play with other children." It seemed like the most obvious answer in the world even if I did not realize to have been whining.\_

\_When my parents exchanged looks with one another they shared one expression that I could only describe as something mixed between aggrieved and fear and acceptance, almost as though they knew my question would soon come. \_

\_My father spoke in his usually gruff voice when he began to tell the tale. His voice always sounded very deep and rumbled in a way that made me slightly intimidated by him, but once I grew older I would see how broken it sounded. Anyway back to his story. Well not before a brief history lesson from himâ€|. my father needed to learn that a five year old's attention span could only linger for a short amount of time. \_

\_Berk-en-Shire has always been called home ever since our earliest Viking ancestors settled here by the wave crashing arches that littered the bay and one thick forest near the east. It never once occurred to them that living near cliffs that were hundreds of meters above the coast probably would not be easy for fishing, but those were the Vikings for you, it was a hazardous occupation; it was do or die in their lifestyle which honestly has not changed in the last several hundred years. \_

\_The people of Berk-en-Shire love living in these hostile conditions, according to Father, they never thought of leaving the so-called proud land they worked so hard into claiming. Nor did any of them once thought of leaving after the apparent infestation plaguing that piece of land. Most villages had to deal with mice, or irksome insects that liked biting you on places that should be remained unmentioned; we had something worse, far worse than anything else.

\_

\_Brace yourself journal as I utter the shocking truth.

\_

\_Dragons.\_

â€|\_. Even when I was small I quickly assumed my father was lying. I have never seen a dragon before, even from the top of my tower, and made the assumption at an early age that they were only true on the pages of books I enjoyed reading. But he was insistent along with my mother that dragons did indeed live in our village or at least somewhere near it since they always arrived abruptly in the middle of the night. They always went after our livestock and other foods we had gathered from fishing and gaming. Blunt force was necessary to fight the beasts and prevent them from stealing more food. Father was

naturally the best at killing dragons with his hammer. I for one believe he could easily take one down with his bare hands, but that is my opinion and I am sadly getting off topic again. \_

\_Anyway, father told me that during his generation as a dragon killer he and the rest of the slayers began to notice that there was one dragon that appeared different than the rest. It never stole any food, never showed its true outline for anyone, and NEVER\_\_ missed its target. This dragon was different than the rest because it could plan, calculate, think in a way that's probably inhuman (obviously), and never fails at its tasks at hand. It was easy to say that this mysterious dragon for its stealth and leadership skills, something that my father begrudgingly admitted the dragon held, led the other dragons. Eventually my father and the rest of the hunters planned a way to capture or kill the beast they had later on called the Night Fury. Why it was given a name like that is a mystery to me, father claimed that it was based off some Norse demon from the olden days that was the offspring of lightning and Hel itself and-sorry getting off topic again.\_

\_The village settled with their plan on Christmas week in the year 1795. Exactly three months before I was born.\_

\_The plan itself was rather simple but clever. Simple because most of it involved leading the Night Fury toward the main village square toward a fishing net the size of a house. Clever, because the net was made with thin metal fibers that was so small and minuscule that even a house fly would get stuck in it. I never actually seen the net but I am taking my father's word for it especially for what is to come. Since it was my father's brilliant plan to capture the Night Fury he had the honor of ripping its heart out, killing the beast with one slash from a dagger. The very moment he plunged his hand into the dragon's bosom a large shriek was heard. \_

\_I had asked if it came from the dragon when I interrupted for the umpteenth time during his story but father said no, he spoke with his tone slightly mournful at that point in time, almost as though he felt regretful for killing the dragon. I of course know the reason why he was mournful.\_

\_The painful shriek came from a small woman pushing through the crowd that swarmed to see the Night Fury at long last. She was the most ghastly apparition he had ever seen, my father said. Her hair was sickly pale white as was her skin that appeared as though to be nothing but skin and bones. Her eyes had a glazed over look that might have once been the color blue but were shriveled up along with the rest of her form. She half-dragged herself toward the platform where my father and the dragon was and glared half-blinded at him.

\_

'\_Stoick Haddock, the Vast, Chief of Berk-en-Shire!' she cried in a ghostly wail. 'You had taken the life of one that cannot be replaced. This poor being did nothing to deserve this fate.'\_

\_Of course Father thought differently. 'I did what needed to be done to save this village.' His words were accompanied by the supportive cries from the other villagers, they almost drowned out what the old woman spoke until she shouted, 'If this is how you judged others by their appearance alone then look at your slain beast a second time!'\_

\_My father turned to look and was beyond shocked to see the form of a naked man took the place of the Night Fury. \_

\_It was at this part of the story that my mother wanted to stop the story, but my eagerness outweighed her worry, even though she had a good reason for it. \_

\_When my father in the story turned his attention back to the witch she already vanished from his sight. She appeared over the village's stone archway that was the town's entrance, the arch I can barely make out from my viewpoint in the tower. The witch stood erect with her eyes blazing red while pointing menacingly at my father. \_

\_She spoke the immortal words that changed not only my father's life and my mother's but also myself. \_

'\_As my son has lost his life, so shall yours!'\_

\_In a flash of lightning she vanished once again. Nighttime has finally arrived as the sun has set. I must go for another night with my parents. I hope to write to you soon.\_

\* \* \*

><p><em>August 24<em>\_th,\_\_\_ 1810~\_

\_For the next three months my father had the village and lands surrounding it patrolled for the witch and kept the Haddock estate guarded day and night. Not even my mother was allowed to leave the castle while she was heavy with child, though it was a harsh winter that year with it holding on with both hands and not wishing to let go. The words that the witch spoke still rang in my father's ears since that infamous night and it seemed no one slept peacefully as no one knew how the witch would strike. A few guessed that the witch would come into the bed chamber of my parents room and kill my mother-once more she insisted to my father that telling the story in, pardon the phrase, bloody detail would not be wise for my age. Once again I insisted I was fine with hearing the tale with no abridgement. With a reluctant sigh my mother conceived defeat-another more superstitious guess was that the witch had already done her work and may have poisoned the not yet born child while it was still in the womb. I am very glad to know that many of these rumors proved to be false. Sadly I think having me be a stillborn would have been a better fate than what the witch truly did to me. \_

\_I was born prematurely on the 29\_\_th\_\_ of February in 1796 on a blisteringly cold winter's morning, so cold that people believed that Jack Frost was contracting frostbite as well. Despite my small size and early birth the midwife announced me as a healthy babe, my parents rejoiced with \_blessing \_me with the name Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III. Not the worst name ever given but it was one that belonged to two other strong Viking ancestors of mine. I have yet to learn anything about them but I digress. Sadly the extra precautions and vigil watches that were appointed after my birth were all for naught. \_

\_On the next morning right before sunrise my parents woke to a clatter next door to the room where I slept. They both heard the shouts from a woman and quickly ran to see what was the ruckus all

about. When they saw her hands wrapped protectively around a thick Holy Bible in her hands as she pointed a finger toward the fallen cradle. My father became equally hysterical as her and grabbed her shoulders accusing her of being the witch's accomplice until my mother found the truth behind young maid's frightened form. Inside the cradle was a small lankly little creature with black scales covering every part of the skin with small patches of lighter black appearing as splotches. Wings with the shape of a bat protruded off of the back and two smaller ones on the tail and fins at the tip. Sharp talons clawed where fingers were supposedly meant to be while small plates appeared around the head. The only things that prevented the little beast from being killed on sight was that on its head was a small tuft of auburn hair and the eyes matched the same color as my father. Yes, that little beast of a dragon, a miniature Night Fury, the unholy offspring of lightning and death was I. \_

\_It was the predestined fate for my existence, to become a literal terror before even reaching the age of two every night while I became human at dawn until sunset. There was nothing that could be done to change me. My parents used everything in their power to summon the finest physicians, healers, mystic shamans, everything to find a cure. They had to pay hefty fines to keep the guests from talking about myâ€|. 'condition.' They even fired all of the servants and paid them handsomely to not blabber on about my appearance, while my parents prevented me from leaving the castle by any means. \_

\_It was at the age of five I began to understand why I was so different. I was forced to stay inside the castle grounds and remain in the walls. My parents would not change like me, as I was the only person who could. It only got worse as time went by. I had learned from the 'guests' that kept arriving to the castle were actually representatives from the village stating that they were beginning to think that my father was unfit to lead them as he and his wife had become very inclusive since they started mourning for my death. No I am still alive, do not be alarmed journal, my parents simply lied that I had perished during the cold winter-that just proves how \_loving\_ they were to me by telling the world that I had died sickly and was cremated not too long after. \_

\_With my father being more reclusive with each passing year it is not hard to understand why the people wished for a change in leadership, but like our ancient Viking bylaws, a leader needed to be chosen from the same family that currently leads the tribe. A very old and dated practice in my opinion-I have always been a supporter of that democracy that those United States have been using but once again this is my opinion and not at all important to the story.\_

\_It became a long lasting argument until the 27\_\_th\_\_ of July that my father at the age of forty-two finally abdicated the position of village chief to his distant cousin Algrick Oggelbert, a man I thankfully never had the pleasure of meeting face-to-face. Not that my father would allow it anyway but I always heard that dear cousin 'Al' was not the nicest person to get acquainted with. On the bight side the Haddock estate remained part of our land since we were still technically Haddocks while Al was not. So that turned out all right in the end, right? \_

\_Sadly I will disclose that it-not much of a surprise-only got worse. Or at least I think something must be wrong with me since I have been feeling quite odd for sometime now after my birthday last February. I

have yet to convinced my father and mother but with a little more time I think my theory will be proven true.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>And before you ask no, it's not over, not by a long shot. I must say I am very proud of this chapter. :D Probably the best first chapter I have written in a while. I do not know when I shall update on the next one but I will do my best since this is as far as I can go with this chapter for right now. I do hope you guys will be kind enough to review this story and give me all the feedback you can and I shall respond to the best of my abilities. ^-^

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 2. Confessions of a Teenage Cute Bruiser

\*\*Q-A: \*\*Here we go with chapter 2. I must say I did not expect such a quick response and wave of favorites from so many people just after day 1. \*Tears up overdramatically\* You must all really like me.  
(;

This is a shout-out to \_ .ryder\_, \_I am very glad you liked the first chapter. I am sorry that Hiccup sounded a lot different than normal but trust me when I say that won't last for long. XD

Here's another for \_Ami.\_ I'm afraid I can't tell you what is going to happen in the story because if I did it would ruin the plot.  
XD

And a reminder to my devoted viewers out there, I won't get a lot of chances at writing the next two months with college about to start up for me. XP Sucks doesn't pay its writers. I would do it forever if I could. Shame there aren't any HTTYD fanfiction on \_ , \_they actually pay the fanfic writers there.

\*\*Disclaimer: \*\*None of the characters are mine. The story is from my own thought process though. :)

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Confessions of a Teenage Cute Bruiser<strong>

August 23rd 2010~

\_If 1 and -1 are all equal to each other, then what is the final number in the respective cubes?\_

A pair of blue eyes rolled at the question while one hand tapped against the wooden desk. It was only the second week of school and the math teacher still played out the easy questions, or at least they were to Astrid even though she wouldn't admit it in public. Still, math was her least favorite subject so far with it being the most boring out of her other ones.

Everyone was warned that Fourth Year would get alarmingly difficult as each week passed. So far Astrid felt less nervous about her classes, she was more ticked off than anything else. She wanted some kind of challenge from her teachers, not be treated like some knob

that didn't know the difference between a bashyball to a football  
\*\*(1)\*\*.

She was smarter than this.

Astrid quietly decided to put the blame on her classmates; they always slowed her down since as long as she could remember. By force of habit Astrid peered over toward her peers gave them short glances after her eyes trailed off to read the clock for the umpteenth time that period.

The gargantuan Ingerman boy, nicknamed Fishlegs, was re-reading a problem over. Knowing him Astrid had a feeling he was looking it over just to be certain that he wrote the question correctly. He was already done with the worksheet.

To Astrid's left was the complete opposite of Fishleg's physique, Tuffnut. He was the fraternal twin brother to her friend, Ruffnut Thorston.

â€|..

Their parents weren't the best when it came to naming their kids. Mrs. Ingerman was a runner up in the weak naming department too apparently.

Tuffnut looked bored out of his mind and looked busy with picking at a scab on his arm. Gross. Behind Astrid was another guy she (regretfully) knew. The same guy that currently checking her out in the annoying way. Snotlout Jorgenson.

\_If he is still looking at my arse I'll go kick his in Bashyball practice today. \_Astrid thought with a pleased smile as she finished the final question (zero) just as the bell rang.

The sound of chairs scrapping against the hard floor echoed while students hastily shuffled their notebooks into their respected rucksacks and scrambled up to the door while the teacher attempted to get their test packets. \*\*(2)\*\* Astrid hurried with her supplies as well but intentionally left her paper on the teacher's desk. There were two reasons she wanted to get out quickly; English was the next and final period of the dayâ€|and to avoid Snotlout's weak attempts at flirting. Astrid wasn't successful at the latter.

"So my parents let me change the basement into a gym last weekend and I reckoned you like working oot, you look like you work-" Snot-face didn't have time to finish his sentence when the onslaught of Second Year students went stampeding through the hallways again. It was moments like this Astrid liked that all the First Years through Sixth Years shared the same building.

"Whoops that looked like it hurt." The young and forever energetic Camicazi quipped. She emerged from the S2 students. She spent most of her time upperclassmen mostly insisting that they were better company ("But them boys are sure baheid half of the time."). The short wild haired blonde peered over to Snotlout-still face down on the floor-and scrunched her nose.

"I knew you were wantin' to find a lass to winch with but I didn't know you'd go after the floor." \*\*(3)\*\*



The beefy jock scowled unattractively at the girl. "Who asked you tae come here?"

"She followed the crowd like everybody else, duh?" Ruffnut appeared moments later with an amused smirk permanently etched on to her face. She stood over to her brother seconds later and punched his shoulder affectionately. Tuffnut, not being the sharpest axe in the weaponry, assumed she wanted to fight and not too long after they both began to argue and aggressively wrestle each other. Fishlegs tried to get between them but did little with him rarely going into brawls. Another typical day in the Berkenshire Secondary School.

The whole gang was altogether now, Astrid mused after doing a mental headcount. Well except for another girl that sometimes hung out with them, Heather, but she was in Biology for her final period. English was the last class for the rest of them—except for—

"Why are you even here?" Snotlout narrowed his eyes at Camicazi. He was still upset over the comment and trampling from earlier.

Camicazi stuck her tongue out and crossed her arms. "I can be where ever I want, do what I want, when I want."

"Don't you have yer own math class to go to though?" Fishlegs asked finally after he gave up breaking Ruffnut and Tuffnut apart.

The speed count on Camicazi was obliterated less than a second as a speeding devil zoomed through the halls causing several underclassmen to dodge away by jumping through the windows.

\_Yep a typical day like always.\_ Astrid thought dryly as she ignored the resumed chattering in the hallway and walked casually to her next class.

\* \* \*

><p>English was a class that Astrid had no problem tolerating but had some trouble with. It wasn't that she couldn't do the reading assignments or dictating the meaning behind a word but the analyzing characters she struggled with. She rarely cared about what other people did, as she preferred to be in the action instead of watching it. What could she possibly gain from reading some story about a person doing some verb when she was able to do it herself? She didn't have a problem reading-unlike a certain set of twins-she could tolerate it, Astrid just wish there was something more interesting to read than the dull texts assigned in class.<p>

But still, English was an acquired subject for her to do if Astrid wanted to get out of Berkenshire and leave the sleepy fishing town and out to \_Moray University \_with a sports scholarship as her free ride. Anything had to be done in order for her to be free from the simple town she lived in, and that meant passing English.

\_At least the teacher here is a lot more fun than everyone else.\_  
\_Astrid thought with a slightly positive attitude.

"Awrite, awrite aw of yoo settle down." A gruff voice called out over the loud whispering in the classroom. A man clearly passed middle age

deepened his puckered brow when he noticed that the students still weren't paying attention to him. Astrid watched with a hidden smile at what the English teacher was about to do next. Remembering the events from a previous class she covered her ears and waited for the hammer to fall.

Literally.

Ten seconds later a large thump louder than a balloon popping that would somehow become amplified and rage into a sonic boom. Astrid was spared from the infamous five-minute ringing in her ears if she had not placed her hands over her ears. Her eyes glanced to see the teacher smiling triumphantly as he casually placed a spiked hammer under his newly dented desk.

"Now let's try this againâ€¦. good afternoon class." He threw them all a large toothy grin that easily revealed one or two false teeth.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Belch." The class echoed back with shaken tones.

"Didn' I say I prefer Gobber? Callin' mea Belch makes meh sound old... Well old\*\*er\*\* at least." The last comment earned him a few snickers. Astrid rolled her eyes playfully for once, as she and the most of the students were use to the interchangeable limbed man's behavior.

Gobber Belch was someone to have seen many things in his lifetime. He was the kind of man who would weave you a whole story in one sitting no matter how accurate it the story started out or ended. Everyone in the town knew him as the jack-of-all-trades. He was a fisherman at one point (lost his limbs to sharks, forcing him to retire from fishing mackerels with the rest of the men) while also an expert handyman for hire. He was also a teacher at the school since Astrid and the others were little. In a way he was practically a surrogate uncle to most of them, but that didn't mean he cut anyone slack. After all a person like Gobber can't be a big softie when it comes to being the coach for Bashyball.

Astrid held back a smirk as she remembered her vow to wipe the floor on the field later. She was defiantly going to be belter on the field **\*\*(4)\*\***.

"Naw I hope ye all remembered what I asked ye aw tae think over the weekend," Gobber spoke with a knowing grin; he expected most of them forgot the project that he mentioned the previous week.

\_Crap, what was it he wrote on Friday? \_Astrid felt her right hand twitch slightly to where her rucksack was which inside held her planner. She wasn't going to make a scene and grab it like some idiot. Fishlegs beat her to the punch though when he made a scramble for his bag that nearly wiped half of his supplies off his desk. He smiled sheepishly after a round of laughter came from the students around him.

Gobber gave them all a dark look that quickly shut them up. "Fer those of you 'o don't remember we're-mean you aw, not me-going to be doin' a little writing project for the whole term that'll be turned into a essay."

Astrid along with rest of the class unanimously groaned at the news.

"Glad to see you aren't containing yer enthusiasm for the project." Gobber replied with the same attitude from before. "Cummoan you miserable mollusks, you aren't supposed to get this depressed 'til ye reach mah age." He chuckled once more. "Now let meh tell ya more about the project and then you aw can groan."

Gobber elaborated more on the assignment that it was meant to be this journal writing prompt for the class to do everyday and write everything that happened around them. Each prompt had to be a page long (front and back, more outcries came from this-mostly where the Thorstons' desks were at), had to be completely truthful so no made up stories (Fishlegs cringed at the one) and was worth ten percent of the term's grade. Astrid grumbled at hearing that.

She couldn't believe the luck she was given. Why did it have to be such a mundane chore? Astrid was an action girl, sitting around on her behind to write was not her style. Also she had no idea what to write about. Astrid Hofferson hated to admit a weakness but she was never a creative person.

\_Good thing I won't be the only one suffering through this whole experience. \_The sounds of disgruntled sighs were heard all around her.

"So let's get started on Chapter 4 and review shall we?"

\_Why can't I have normal homework to go along with this normal day?

><em>

\* \* \*

><p>Astrid stuffed her tie away into her locker after removing her school uniform and replacing it with her sports gear. Bashyball required a player to wear shoulder pads, shin guards, elbow pads, and pumps that looked more like standard issued military boots than gym shoes. <strong>(5)</strong>

Back in the old days, according to Gobber-the fabulist wonder-he and his classmates never had to wear them, but some parent six years ago got all whiny about their child being placed in the emergency room one, two, many times and 'precautions' had to be made. Right when Astrid shoved her vomit-green tie away toward her matching plaid skirt and white blouse ("God, why can't I just wear trousers like the guys?" Astrid had once complained at Ruffnut. "I swear someone must've been watching one of those Asian cartoons when they fabricated this washcloth here.") her book bag fell out, spilling several textbooks and one journal.

Astrid picked up the journal last with the first page mockingly opened in front of her. Her blue eyes hardened at the current date written out on the right hand side. Why did this have to be such a chore? Nothing came into mind for what she could write.

\_Maybe I should think of this like \_Facebook\_ since that's what going in Gobber's head right now. \_With this newfound idea Astrid took out

a pen from her bag and wrote out her first prompt for the assignment.

\_8/23/10 \_

\_This afternoon when classes ended I went to Haddock Field to practice Bashyballâ€| this is STILL a gammy project to do.

\_

\_-Astrid Hofferson \_

Not worthy for a nomination for the \_European Prize for Literature \_but it was a start. Astrid pushed the journal and her bag back into the locker as she walked off for practice.

\_Hopefully Gobber will be the only one that reads the journal. Can't have any more rubbish spoken aloud about me. \_Astrid thought with prospect\_.\_

The last thing she needed was people to know the real her.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>For a little bit of clarification for you non-Scotts out there, the education system in Scotland with this year system that is used in the United Kingdom. S1 is short for First Year, which is the age between 11-12 while S6 stands for Sixth Year obviously and is for the 17-18 year olds. In this story I try to imagine most of the teenagers in S3 for 13-14 years olds with one or two exceptions. :D Cami being one of them of course.

\*\*(1) Knob â€" idiot \*\*

\*\*(2) Rucksack is a backpack \*\*

\*\*(3) Kissing with tongues\*\*

\*\*(4) Belter â€" fantastic\*\*

\*\*(5) I kid you not. Another name for gym shoes in Scotland is pumps. But for you odd ones out there you can imagine them as high heels. XD Wouldn't that be a fun sport to watch? \*\*

And remember guys I won't be able to do a lot of writing until the end of November when the college quarter is done for me. XP

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

### 3. Castlemania

\*\*Q-A: \*\*Almost ten reviews after only two chapters. :D Gah, again you put feelings into my heart that makes me smile. Squee! Who else is excited that Dragons: Defenders of Berk is just around the corner? I know I am. For those of you who have finally wanted to see Hiccup again (and meet Astrid X3) you'll get that opportunity here! Yay!

\*\*Disclaimer: \*\*Nothing. I own nothing. If I did, I mostly would make the Vikings build a worshiping shrine for Toothless in either HTTYD2

or the third one. Or even make the film series longer than three films. :D

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Castlemania<strong>

Astrid was a beast...

At least on the field, and if you ever accused of her being fierce off the field though, well actually she would affirm that accusation without a beat. Though calling her weak would definitely land you with a broken nose, just ask Tuffnut. It happened to him about a week actually-Enough character development! Back to our favorite cute bruiser chucking a thick yak bladder skinned ball at unsuspecting victims.

Ooh~ she finally got her revenge on Snotlout as he fell to the ground with his hands covering his face. That had got to hurt.

Running around and tackling people to the ground was Astrid's element, something that she would never brag about of course. Bashyball required the skill and brainpower of a five year old to play, so it wasn't rocket science. It was the very taunt that Camicazi enjoyed calling out to the boys when she had to sit at the bleachers. She was too young to play the game according to school ruling. Even with whiny and biting from her mother Camicazi had to wait a full year for her turn on the field.

Bashyball practice started after school without a hitch. It was mandatory to take an extracurricular activity in order to graduate. While most students would slack on this particular graduation requirement until Sixth Year, Astrid and the rest couldn't wait to starting playing, all except for Fishlegs and Heather. Both of them had this weak excuse claiming they wanted to live by their Fifth Year. They usually took the spots on the teams that involved the 'less aggressive' action as they put it.

\_A real game is only fun when you get a scar out of it after all.\_  
Astrid thought palpably while dodging Tuffnut's side kick to her left.

The sport itself is played in a similar manner like rugby with the opposing teams clashing each other in a large dog pile-like method at the beginning of each round. The Irish sport, Caid, is almost identical to Bashyball with players being allowed to carry the ball, hand passing, and bouncing it. **\*(1)\***

The most popular move that was exclusively used in Bashyball was keeping-the-other-opposing-teammate-from-getting-t  
o-the-ball-by-pushing-it-into-their-face-and-grabb  
ing-the-ball-after-the-player-falls-unconsciousâ€| Hey it may sound like an illegal play but in Bashyball it is allowed since there are barely any ground rules to go against any harsh plays that could lead someone into the hospital.

â€|.

Again why would Fishlegs and Heather dislike playing such a well-loved sport?

Weirdoes, that's what they are.

Speaking of Fishlegs, he was placed at the goalpost, as was Heather on the opposite side of the field. From Astrid's viewpoint, he didn't look too thrilled about being part of the game. The poor young man was shaking like a leaf with deer in headlight eyes widening every other millisecond. His expression worsened the very moment Ruffnut faked a left and then grabbed the ball under Astrid's nose. She was not happy with this turn of events.

Ruffnut grinned with glee after finally stealing the ball from her best friend. Sure Astrid was brilliant and all but when it came to Bashyball it became every lady and/or annoying brother for his or herself. She was nearing the goal post.

Almost there.

She could hear Astrid's angry yells behind her. Ruff needed to stay focused.

Almost, Ruffnut smirked when she saw a trembling Fishlegs. Just a few more yards-

"Yaah~!" Moments later Astrid toppled over Ruff and tackled the other blonde onto the ground, sending the bashyball spinning. With the speed and velocity faster than any Common Swallow (whether carrying a coconut or not) the ball flew right at Fishlegs like a gunshot. Surprisingly for him, Fishlegs was able to block the ball only for it to fly a meter or so up the air and land straight down into the long uncut grass nearing the Haddock Castle.

All eyes that had gaped at the zooming ball now landed at the looming fortress before the field. Nearly everyone had gob smacked expressions as they looked toward the grass. Fishlegs looked like he was ready to pass out.

"Well that's just bloody fantastic." Tuffnut glowered at Fishlegs before putting his attention back at the tall grass. "We don't have a ball anymore." He cursed under his breath after kicking a plate of grass off of the ground. Gobber wouldn't be too happy seeing some damage on the field, even if other people thought it was cursed too.

"We could ask Gobber for another one." The black-haired beauty named Heather suggested. Everyone looked at her with incredulous looks. "What?"

Snotlout snickered. "Sure we can and then later we'll all be hung by our toes in rusty chains outside of the town hall."

"I think Gobber was joking when he said that from the **\*\*last\*\*** bashyball we lost." Astrid replied with her tone staying neutral. Her eyes never left the castle grounds as she stared at the building with mild distaste.

"Someone's gotta go there and get it back before Gobber show's up." Ruffnut spoke in a voice that implied heavily she wanted to be the last person offered to go. Everybody in Berkenshire knew that Castle Haddock was a terrible place since the old legend told of something

evil lurking inside.

"Don't look at me I'm not goin' in'." Tuffnut shoved his sister when she glanced at his way.

"Well I'm not either."

"Don't be such a wimp!"

"Better a wimp than dead!"

"Will you two knock it off?" Camicazi spoke moments later as she tumbled in to join the party. Her fearless stature looked over at the castle a few times before saying, "Ill go get the ball while you all act like little scared boys."

Fishlegs squeaked. "That wouldn't be such a good idea. Everyone in the village knows Castle Haddock is not foundationally sound to go in. It's like a 30 percent chance you might not come out alive."

"Sounds like a challenge to me." Camicazi spoke with the same spirit as before, not at all phased by the others concerns. She knew about the cursed castle but always though the legend silly and believed it was something grown-ups fibbed about in order to keep the children from having any real fun. Her fingers always itched to go inside and see if there were any lost treasures to plunder. Even at the ripe old age of thirteen Camicazi enjoyed playing pirate as the next overactive child.

A soft hand gripped the short girl's shoulder like a like a wolf clamping its teeth shut on prey. This was the 'gentle touch' of Astrid Hofferson.

"You are not going anywhere near that stone deathtrap, Cami'." Astrid swore. "We can't have your mum asking questions now do we?"

A collective shiver passed through most of the boys. Bertha Bog was the last woman anyone wanted to cross with. She was overprotective of her only daughter, claiming she was her last memento to her lost seafaring husband. It was common that most men lose their lives to the violent storms. Another good reason Astrid wanted to leave the quiet Shetland Island town, so to avoid any complications if someone she cared about got lost during a fishing trip. Not that she needed to rely on anyone of course. Still, the Bogs were good friends to the Hoffersons, and Astrid felt it was her obligation to watch out for Camicazi on and off school grounds.

"But I can really do it, really." Cami's eyes grew big, deliberately trying to sway Astrid into reconsidering.

The upperclassman was completely stern, and she shook her head. "No. It's better that I'll go do it."

"Are ye daft?" Ruffnut cried out in shock. "Nobody has ever gone into that castle and come out alive." Her expression was mixed between fear and total excitement. She secretly wanted to go into the castle to see if there really were some hideous beast that old stories talked about but then who was going to torment her brother if she ever died? Plus dying in an old castle sounded boring. Jumping off

the cliffs for diving and possibly drowning, now that was exciting.

"Then I'll be the first." Astrid spoke coolly with complete confidence.

"The chances of you surviving will dwindle into single digits." Fishlegs tried to warn Astrid of the impending doom that was about to fall on her. Didn't she know that the castle had zero visitors and the more important part of it being cursed? Fishlegs never liked the stories his mother told him about the castle but he knew why she had to tell them. Everyone needed to stay clear of Castle Haddock, whether the old rumors were true or not Fishlegs decided he would be the last person to find out.

"If you die, Heather and I will be the only intellectuals in our group!" Fishleg's warning sounded more like a complaint this time around.

Snotlout grunted in anger and grabbed Fishlegs by his shoulders. "What did ya just say?"

"I'm guessing yer too much of a dobber to know 'big words'?" Camicazi said slyly while using air-quotes.

Ruffnut and Heather snickered while Snotlout pushed Fishlegs to the ground, as his face grew red. "Why ya little-"

The daily gang brawl commenced as Astrid walked away quietly. It was moments like these she appreciated half of her friends being complete testosterone-driven maniacs.

She walked through the tall grass with purpose as most of her waist was hidden away. Sometimes she needed to step on a rock to check that she was still walking to the right direction. When she stood on a fallen boulder-sized brick Astrid got a clear view of the castle. It was beginning to look bigger and more menacing than before.

Astrid never really liked the looks of Castle Haddock to begin with. Not even when she was a child, so when her mother and everyone else's mother told them all at the wee age to never go anywhere near the castle Astrid was more than eager to obey.

She wasn't afraid of its decrepit appearance with cracked stone walls, broken glass windows, moss covered drum towers, crumbling battlements that looked ready to collapse on any given moment and the larger than life size and stature that would be deemed impossible to duplicate even in modern times. She only thought that the whole thing looked unappealing. Okay the castle was not ugly to look at by any means it was clearly to look grand as well as fortified but Astrid simply disliked how it was different from the small brownish homes in the town. The only thing that was whiter than the castle was probably the mayor's estate. Clearly there was a theme in all this that Astrid could look over but didn't have the patience.

After what felt like an eternity Astrid finally arrived at her destination. From the viewpoint she had seen Astrid saw the bashyball fell far over the tall grass and landed somewhere closer to the castle. But many to her surprise she didn't see any traces of the ball's whereabouts on the castle grounds. When she spotted a broken



window with a familiar round-looking shaped hole Astrid grumbled.

\_This is it, no turning back.\_ Astrid pep-talked herself into walking to toward the front doors. Unlike most castles, this one had no front gates or giant walls to prevent anyone from invading. The only thing Astrid noticed that could probably keep people out was the large fortified battlement and a pair of two giant-arse doors that looked like they were made for some humongous troll in of the fairy-tales her mother use to read to her.

Astrid looked over at the two front doors with small awe and intimidation. They were made entirely out of wood that once upon a time must have been shining in a glossy coat now looked old and worn with some of the lumber chipping off but not molding in anyway. The carvings on the doors were beautiful to look at with magnificent carvings of Vikings attacking many foes. A few looked like Celts with accurate knots tied to their appearance in one way or another. Monks inspired by the medieval paints cowered before a bearded Viking that pillaged treasure from a small church and far more fantastic than any of those previously mentioned images were dragons.

Dragons that flew, breathed fire, charged at scowling Vikings, and stabbed repeatedly over and over. Astrid quickly averted her eyes toward something lessâ€¦|graphic. One last image she looked at was of another Viking fighting a dragon that Astrid had trouble defying. At school they had a history class that lectured on the Vikings and their 'encounters' with dragons. It was completely pointless since dragons were of course not real but for some reason they were heavily embedded into Berkenshire's culture. All types of dragons were discussed but the one Astrid was looking at did not remind her of the copied texts she had seen in the schoolbooks.

\_Keep your mind focused. We're not here to sightsee. Just 'cause this place is like the castle in Embra doesn't mean anythin.'\_

Finalizing with the idea Astrid placed one hand on one of the doors and pressed on it. The moment her hand landed on the door it pushed forward and opened with a large enough crack that Astrid had no trouble walking in.

\_Figures this castle has no lock. This place is more dated than half of Gobber's stories.\_ Astrid couldn't help but chuckle slightly at knowing how correct her statement was. Her voice echoed along the large room she appeared in making small shivers crawl back onto her again.

"No need to be scared. I'll just get the ball and bolt." Astrid silently cursed when she realized that she had no torch to light the way. She was forever grateful that the walls had plenty of windows for sunlight to be streaming in. "Oddâ€¦| half of these appear to be made with stained glass."

The sound of metal falling startled Astrid, nearly making her jump up three feet in the air. She looked over at wild eyes and saw a suit of armor having collapsed.

"It's just some old metal that fell over itself, nothing strange about thatâ€¦| why am I talking to myself?" Astrid asked no one as she resumed walking. It was going to take a lot more than some old metal

sheets to scare her. She walked further down the room with her daring stance barely shaken. Her eyes darted toward corners and other spots a ball would fall into but still found no traces of the aforementioned item. All she could see were woven tapestries that were the size of her house and large stone impressions of more Vikings. The ceilings had fine arches that some art history major would have swoon at the sight of.

This area might be a church if it weren't for all the Viking motifs. Astrid thought lightly as she looked at another tapestry by a window. She cursed audibly as the setting sun began to fade over the horizon.

I\_t can't be that late already? All right fine, I'll just go look for the exit and go.\_

Astrid decided finally as she started to look for a way out. \_Uhh, which hallway did I go through before coming to this room?\_

For some reason Fishlegs' warning from earlier gave Astrid an unsettling feeling in her stomach.

\* \* \*

><p><em>Okay this is starting to turn out really bad. <em>

Astrid was finally beginning to openly agree with Fishlegs for once. That right turn she took a few paces before ended her up in an entirely different location than the large hall she was in with the excellent tapestries. Now she had found herself in a narrow corridor with some light still streaming through tiny windows that were too small for Astrid to even bash her head through.

\_I'm losing it; already I've thought three ways to escape this maze of a hellhole by harming myself. And I was talking aloud again.\_

Clearly something was odd about the castle since it felt like she was inside this place forever and yet only a few hours had passed. Still, by this point in time Astrid was sure the others were already starting to get worried. The sun was nearing the vanishing point, and the interior of the castle was already looking darker and creepier.

\_\*\*Why \*\*didn't I bring my torch with me?\_ Suddenly Astrid felt a warm blast of heat behind her that gave her goosebumps. She turned around fast to see a literal torch lit up on the side of a wall.

"What the-" the blonde mouthed until another torch was ignited a few meters after the first one. As her eyes, almost bulged out their sockets Astrid walked over to torch closest to her. She grew bewildered when she saw that the fire flickering glowed a bluish color for a bit until it became the standard red-yellow Astrid was more familiar with occurred again with more torches lightening up down a corridor. The same blue fire appeared on each torch momentarily until it became the familiar reddish-yellow color.

She blinked owlishly toward the fire for a few seconds until the strange phenomenon from earlier happened again with a dozen newly lit

torches led a pathway down a new stone hallway. Clearly someone-or something was trying to help Astrid out. But do to her nature Astrid was hesitant into following the trail of lights.

\_Those old stories about the Will O' the Wisps, Mum told me, are starting to look realistic... God what's wrong with me? Getting nervous over some silly fairy tales.\_

Astrid mentally berated herself. She was not in anyway a superstitious person. If she were... Well then she wouldn't even be in the castle in the first place. The logical reasoning behind all of this was that there was someone else in the castle and was trying to help her. Why they were doing it in such an odd way was beyond Astrid's understanding. Either way it was the only option she had left when her eyes saw that there was hardly any light from the window.

\_Dad always told me to give someone a benefit of the doubt sometimes.\_

With no other options to go through Astrid had any other choice than to follow the burning torches, and if you asked her if she were silently praying they weren't being lit by little wisps then the girl would call you out for being mental.

\* \* \*

><p>As it turned out fallowing the torches was the best approach Astrid had done in the last few hours. She was still on her guard though as she tried to see her mystery lighter. Sadly she had no luck with finding any trace of another person in the hall with her. Astrid kept her eyes and ear peeled for a body hanging behind a corner or the sound of feet pattering. She also had trouble with figuring out how the torches were being lit with them somehow being brought out at the corner of her eye every time.<p>

The sound of gushing wind started Astrid out of her thoughts when she realized that she was back in the front hall. She soon noticed the grand doors had opened in accompany to the gust that was heard seconds before. Astrid could almost make out the twilight sky through the crack and sighed in relief.

\_Good this means I won't be missed yet.\_ She chuckled dryly. \_I bet everyone else will have a huge laugh at this and... \_

Her thoughts diminished a second time when she heard a large object fell a good arm's length away. Astrid cried out in alarm and spun around to see what almost landed on her.

Instead of fallen rubble or some misplaced Viking statue, Astrid saw the mangled mess of a body. The outline was rather intangible for her to see clearly, but it was without a doubt the form of a person. Astrid's heart jumped to her throat when she thought the person to be dead. It was a good three-story drop; it would be a miracle for anyone to survive that.

But a miracle is exactly what happened next.

A miracle mixed with shock. The body began to move on it's own and the head jerked to its best where Astrid stood. For a mere moment,

blue eyes stricken with frightened awe were gazed at two feline orbs that matched the color of forest green. A deep forest that captivated the blonde. When Astrid blinked dust from the rubble from her eyes, she was surprised to see the pair opposite of hers blinked back. No sounds were made between them outside of soft breathing as Astrid tried to make grips of the situation.

><em><br>I am inside a cursed castle where some undead cat-thing has led me out of here...almost\_. This was all starting to get too much for Astrid to handle.

For one moment Astrid breathed out a loud sigh which the green-eyed being might have mistook for a sign of trust when a shadowed hand wanting to get into even more trouble than before and the adrenaline of fear fighting against her logic Astrid quickly darted from the hall and into the safety of the outside. She breathed heavily while waiting for her heart rate to lower down again. With a hand on her chest and a beating heart tattooing at the rib cage Astrid made a beeline for the tall grass.

Astrid didn't stop until she was back at the field's edge. Her body was far from the castle but her mind had remained there. \_What was that person? How did heâ€¦ or she survive that fall? What did they want?

><em>

"So where is it?" Ruffnut asked, feigning boredom.

"Where's what?"

"You know the ball you were supposed to get."

Ever since she got lost in that maze like fortress the ball was the last thing on Astrid's mind. She shrugged feebly and muttered an apology while glowering at the ground.

"How did you get out of there alive?" Fishlegs gawked with his hands near his mouth.

"'Cuz she is a strong lass that can kick arse that's how!" Camicazi shouted exultantly,. She did not once notice the distant look on her here's face. "Astrid braved the castle and took the place by storm. Even if ye didn't find that ball you still found meh some treasure didn't cha?"

"Nothing happened, all right." Astrid snapped after everyone's chatter began to annoy her. "I couldn't find the stupid ball because it got too dark inside. If you want to go there and get it yerself, then go on in there."

Tuffnut shook his head and looked slightly frightened. "Uh-uh, there is no way I am goin' in there."

Ruffnut snickered. "Of course you would say that."

"Oh like you would go there yourself?"

"Only if I needed to."

"So let's say I throw you in-"

Heather pulled the two apart and gave them a blank stare. "You guys can't seriously be arguing at a moment like this? Not only do we not have a bashyball but Astrid almost got hurt in that castle."

Snotlout shivered. "Gobber won't be too happy to hear that."

"'Ear what, Snotlout?"

The high unsettling fear from before came back tenfold. Everyone turned around to see the last person they wanted to see. Coach Gobber did not look pleased as he eyed all of the teenagers. Heather sighed in annoyance, Camicazi stood petrified for the very first time since anyone could remember, the twins no longer looked like they wanted to fight anymore, Fishlegs appeared faint, Snoutlout gulped nervously and twiddled his thumbs.

Astrid kept her face expressionless; this was so far the least threatening thing she had witnessed all day.

\* \* \*

><p>The good news was that Snotlout had exaggerated when he warned about the punishment that Gobber would give them. The bad news was that instead they all had to run laps, even Camicazi despite the fact she was not even in Bashyball practice. The sun had set long before they were finished running. It was around 8 o'clock when most of them were either sweating buckets or their throats became dry as sandpaper. Gobber told them the even worse news that because the ball was lost and it was the last one they had in storage the odds of getting a new ball were very slim in. Practice would have to be closed indefinitely. No one, minus Fishlegs and Heather, was glad to hear this turn of events.<p>

"This is so unfair." Ruffnut huffed angrily. "We all have been waiting to do this fer at least forever."

Astrid shook her head once; water from the showerhead threw against the tiled walls. "It wasn't that long, Ruff. We can always wait fer a new ball."

Ruffnut made an obnoxious cough. "Right, and I'm the mayor of this whole town. Face it we're not getting any special treatment just because we like to punch each other into the dirt." A small grin broke out on Astrid's face. Even when Ruff was pissed she still cracked a good joke or two. Another thought came as that grin quickly faded.

\_Is this really the biggest concern all of us are facing right now?\_ Astrid thought incredulous. \_Have they all forgotten what happened just a few hours before with me? Granted, I told in the drop the subject, still I wish they could've at least as mentioned something similar to.\_

When Astrid felt more steam than water on her face she decided to get out. She turned off the faucets, grabbed a towel, and dried herself off as fast as she could. It wasn't long until the other blondes joined her at the sinks.

Camicazi was enveloped in her towel like a cocoon while she dried off

her unruly locks. "Do ye think the booby will get connected about what happened earlier?" **\*(2)**

Ruffnut shook her head no but also to dry her hair off. "Naw, I don't think Gobber would be that thoughtless to call them out. Stuff like that would immediately get the mayor drawn in."

"Ruff's right," Astrid agreed. "Mayor Skall doesn't want anyone to go near that castle. Gobber knows what would happen if **he knew**." she trailed off.

The washroom suddenly grew still as steam rolled over from the showers and smeared on to the mirrors. A knock came from the door, implying it to be Heather as she was indicating that it was her turn to shower. Since the bathroom could only hold three people at the time Astrid offered to leave. She grabbed the clothes from her gym bag.

Once her hair was pulled back into a tight braid Astrid left the showers and headed straight for home with her rucksack in tow. A very small perk of living in a village smaller than an actual suburb was that everything was close by, including the houses. In five minutes or less, Astrid arrived at her two-story generic white house with a picket fence. The only thing that made its outer appearance look less than perfect was that one piece of wood had been broken in half thanks to an incident involving a six-year-old Astrid with a tricycle. It became an unspoken rule in the Hofferson household to not place any pressure on the reduced beam.

But right now that little rule was being broken.

Astrid noticed something small, but shapely resting directly onto the broken fence board. Without another thought, she immediately went over to the fence piece and looked to see the unidentified object. Her mouth formed a small 'o' while she looked at the bashyball directly at her legs.

With the torch from her sack Astrid looked at the ball to inspect it for damage. What she found instead was a neatly folded yellow paper tucked right underneath the ball. The note had a waxed seal over the paper that was the color red and printed with an attractive stamp. A limbless dragon curled in a fetal position surrounded by a circle. Astrid carefully picked away at the symbol gently, wanting to save it for another day and opened up the letter. It was written in a fine cursive calligraphy that read,

\_Good evening Loud-Screaming Girl, \_

\_May I suggest you keep a better eye on your ball? It fell underneath the castle where the basement lies. Do try kicking the ball more kindly next time, that way fewer balls are lost and FEWER windows get broken, moreover.\_

\_Warm regards, the Caretaker of Castle Haddock. \_

"Who the bloody hell wrote this?" Astrid looked at the letter incredulity. It was one of the most bizarre things she had ever looked at, let alone read. What was the note saying about a caretaker? In all the years Astrid lived in Berkenshire she heard nothing about someone actually living there. She was also beginning

to get worried, that the green-eyed person from before must've learned about her enough to know where she lived. Oh god, a person was living in the castle and they knew her home address!

...

\_Wait, did this smart-arse really call me 'Loud-Screaming Girl?' And 'the Caretaker' had the guts to be sarcastic? I almost got lost in that hellhole and I'm the one being criticized? \_

Astrid was beginning to feel less frightened and more annoyed with this caretaker-person. Whoever he or she was they were going to deal with an angry Astrid. And nobody will be happy to see that.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>There we go with chapter 3! Wow wasn't, that, something huh? For those of you who are wondering, yes I molded the insignia for the note from the Berk crest that is used from the TV show and HTTYD 2 teaser trailer. It's on Hiccup's leather armor if you are wondering.

\*\*(1) Caid is another name for Gaelic Football. It's not Scottish but I'm giving it a pass since Berkenshire is clearly not supposed to be a real coastal fishing village in the Scottish Isles.\*\*

\*\*(2) Embra is nickname for Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland.  
\*\*

\*\*(3) Boaby â€" police.\*\*

\*\*Keep on Writin' and Rockin'!\*\*

#### 4. When Will My Life Begin?

\*\*Q-A: \*\*Here we are with chapter 4! This is starting to sound very repetitive now. Well anyway for those of you who wanted more Hiccup (that slight hint from the last chapter wasn't good I know) we get him here finally. :D And another favorite of mine will show up.  
^\_^

\*\*Responses to Guest Reviews: \*\*

\_Danna\_: Thank you very much for the review. I am sorry for the confusion but I promise it will all be explained in this chapter.

\_Dman 21\_: I'm not sure what you found in the last chapter creepy but I am glad for your review all the same.

\_Guest:\_ I thank you for the review and hope to hear more from you soon.

\_somebody:\_ XD Ha, that had to be some of my best writing in the story so far. Just you wait for what other things get written.

\_DarkKingM:\_ yay! I'm happy you like the story so much so far. This one will be a lot of fun to read I promise you.

**\*\*Disclaimer: \*\***If this was all mineâ€|well it would be actually published. XD But hey maybe someday, with a few name changes, some change in plot directionâ€| XDD Naw I wouldn't do that to all of you.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>When will My Life begin?<strong>

It was very much official, he was going to die. That was the exact thought of Hiccup Horrendous Haddockâ€|the Third. Why he was given such a name remains a mystery to this day.

He wasn't sure if it was going to be a literal death by the hands of a rampant mob or by the girl he had just encountered. Out of all the mistakes he could have made, allowing the girl to see him had to be the worst. She now knew that someone was living in the castle. A part of him hoped that the girl didn't see all him, but that sounded more like wishful thinking than anything else.

Hiccup wasn't all that sure what made him want to help the girl (he was starting to regret not knowing her proper name) in the first place. She willingly walked into his home and must have known about the so-called curse laid upon it and yet she strolled in like a walk through the courtyard. Clearly, the girl was the bravest person Hiccup had seen in over a century or the thickest being in the whole village. He quietly decided to go for the former. She was a braveâ€|for human and certainly acted it for a good while but only for that amount of time. As the sun started to set Hiccup began to notice a few changes in the girl's behavior.

\* \* \*

><p>When she first walked through the threshold she had her shoulders back, hands on both sides, and held an expression that read, 'Stay far away from me if you know what is good for you.'<p>

"No need to be scared. I'll just get the ball and bolt." The girl cursed under her breath for reasons unknown to Hiccup. "Oddâ€| half of these appear to be made with stained glass."

\_She sure likes talking to herself a lot. \_Hiccup thought with slight amusement. She was no longer looking that scary anymore as her features grew little soft as she stared at the glowing light that came from the colorful glass.

She was someone Hiccup did not wish to mess with that was for sure. Yes, it was a sad moment for him when he realized that he was intimidated by a girl no taller than he was. But from the way she scowled Hiccup agreed in his mind that hiding behind corners, shadows, and staying completely out of sight was the best option for himâ€|at least until he tripped near a suit of armor and caused the whole thing to collapse on itself.

By the Christian and Norse Gods, he was so inept to do anything right without making a mess first.

\* \* \*



><p>As the hours passed Hiccup began to notice the girl's bravado weakening. Her eyes would shift around to look at random parts of a hall she would pass. She would link her hands together only to break them apart seconds later, and she started to talk to herself. All these were the telltale signs that she did not want to remain in the castle.<p>

Hiccup drew sympathy from this. He knew very well how dark and melancholic his home looked like at night. When the sun started to set Hiccup found an alternative to scurrying on padded human feet over stone floors. He hurried into an abandoned broom closet and unwillingly began the Transformation.

In the early years of his life Hiccup vaguely remembered a burning pain that encased around his skin. The feeling of his stomach churning and body twisting caused his legs to break down, leading the poor boy to struggle through the whole experience on a cold floor. All across his skin Hiccup would feel pricks pushing through him like the opposite effect of nails stabbing through his flesh. Black scales would replace his pasty-colored skin.

A pair of wings, a tail broke out from his back and tailbone respectively as oval plates would push through the sides of his face and head at an abnormal rate. Through this once painful process Hiccup would clench his teeth that retracted up into his gums and fell back in place as sharp fangs. His feet and hands sported talons sharper than knives all the while Hiccup started to see double as his eyes refocused moments later. The Transformation was over. A nightly ritual he had grown use to after so many, many years. It wasn't all that painful anymore with the exception of the slight stomachache, nothing else happened to him after that.

Once his newly formed slit-like eyes adjusted to seeing differently once more Hiccup stretched out his wings before he curled them around his shoulders in a manner very similar to a cape. That little trick took him two decades to get properly right and he was glad with the results. T'was a pity no one else would know of his accomplishments.

\_And that's the way it should be. \_Hiccup added gloomily to himself. He poked his through the room's archway and trained his ears to the sound of delicate feet pattering across the floor. He tilted his head toward the ceiling and smiled at the archways that were there for decorative purposes but not support. From one flap of his wings Hiccup took a vertical takeoff into a glide and landed carefully on one of the false support beams.

\_Honestly, the monks who lived here must have warned that a cursed dragon-boy would be living here in the future. \_Hiccup bend forward to keep his balance and looked down at the girl.

He remembered the first time he spotted her walking inside the castle. From the way she was dressed he mistook her for some kind of warrior until he noticed the armor she wore was made from leather. She had some mud painted across a cheekbone. Her blue eyes focused at every corner of the hall. Her waist was slim but agile for a good fight with a few toned muscles that Hiccup sadly never possessed until he would transform.

He still carried many human-like attributes after the Transformation,

but one thing that he always noticed that he would gain muscular arms and upper body strength. He made the assumption it was meant to hold up all the weight he received from the wings and other additions.

\_Just one of the perks of being me.\_ Hiccup thought with heavy sarcasm. He resumed watching the girl as he started to notice her frightened traits again. \_She really looks scared right now. \_

Why can't she just leave?

What has possessed her to come here if she looks like she wants to be anywhere but here?

\_Oh wait she mentioned something about retrieving a ball earlier. \_Now that he held this newfound knowledge Hiccup gathered himself, uncurled his wings, and glided silently across the ceiling. If he was going to do his next move right he would have to be far enough from the girl so she would not be at a hearing distance.

\* \* \*

><p>When he arrived at a different hallway Hiccup lowered him to the ground and opened his mouth below a strange growl. The moment the wail was voiced Hiccup could hear and feel every vibration all over the land. He heard the tiny wing flap from a fly, a pebble breaking off from a brick, the concern mutterings from the girl, and the howling wind that blew through the decaying rafters. With the room slightly dark he also saw most of these activities occurring at the very moment. It was from that call Hiccup learned that the infamous ball was nowhere on that floor. In less than three seconds he accelerated from a normal pace into the speed of a big cat. By the end of the hall there was around room that inside held a spiral staircase.<p>

A part of Hiccup felt the sudden urge slide down the banister. Remembering the mission Hiccup quickly scramble down the stairs not once tripping with all forepaws charging downward.

Less than a moment later Hiccup arrived at the basement. If there was one place Hiccup disliked being in than his own tower was the dark and cold underground of the castle. Hardly any light ever came down-save from the very few windows that existed down there-and was not a very pleasant place to be in. Feeling both aggravated and nervous Hiccup quickly cried out a second time to his echolocation. From suit of armor's, ripped rugs, aged wines, other missing valuables that were never accounted for, and one door that led another room Hiccup sensed a round ball. With no time to cheer ecstatically Hiccup rushed over between two old picture frames underneath a broken window and found a round sphere no bigger than a cannonball. Hiccup effortlessly picked the ball up in his hands and inspected it for any identification. His enhanced sense of smell picked up a small trace of the girl's sent.

\_Human sweat mixed with a small hint of vanilla and nutmegâ€|hmmm. Ugh, some ripened Berk-Bog Roses! \_Hiccup quickly shook his head to wake up and did everything in his willpower to forget the foul scent of a cowpat that had just wafted through his nostrils.

That's what he got sticking his nose into other people's

business.

After reminding himself to stay focused Hiccup grabbed a satchel from a woven basket nearby and hurried back up the stairs.

\* \* \*

><p>From the same staircase used from before Hiccup prepared to climb out with the bag in tow. When his teen years picked up a new sound coming around a corner he lowered his head down and pressed his whole body towards the ground, instincts at full alert and his fangs bared. Moments passed before the girl was seen walking down the hall with her eyes all over the place and her lip being bitten down savagely.<p>

\_That was entirely pointless. I really need to learn how to control that. \_Hiccup thought as his guard went down again. His memory kicked in when he recalled that the girl had already passed through this very hall they were both in. He didn't have to put two and two together to realize that the girl was definitely lost.

\_Now I really need a help her. But I can't let her see me. No one must see me. What can I do? Unless she has echolocation of her own to lead her outâ€| Wait that's it! Time to do something possibly stupid.\_ Hiccup retracted his teeth and opened his mouth widely. He aimed right at the blown out torch hanging on the wall. The fire blast started out blue like most of his fire blasts did and exploded slightly before turning into the normal color that fire is associated with. The small explosion caught the girl off guard for a few precious seconds, which allowed Hiccup to scramble out of his hiding place.

As he hurried Hiccup shot another fireball toward a torch not too far off from the first one. With another distraction added on he flew up into the air and quietly clutched onto ceiling arch. A crooked smile spread across his features when he spotted the girl looking at the newly lit torches, bewildered. He ignited another torch in the direction of the right side of the hallway leading to the entrance of the castle.

\_Maybe just a few more to get the message straight. \_Hiccup thought placidly. To prevent himself from making any sounds Hiccup glided over to each archway before and after blasting more torches. It didn't take long before the girl began to start getting the idea and followed the line of fire. The smile on his face curved into a full grin as he watched in triumph of the girl safely walking back out. As he watched her walk closer and closer to the main hall a slight feeling that Hiccup had only just re-discovered; loneliness.

This was the very first time Hiccup had ever seen an outsider within the castle walls. He was always on the inside looking outward beyond the safe protection of his stony prison. Hiccup felt another emotion curl uncomfortably within him. The feeling of envy grew inside him. The girl was walking freely in the castle but unlike him she also had the liberty to walk in the streets of Berkenshire and not be discriminated by her outer appearance like he most definitely would be. Hiccup shook his head; he was not a little child anymore, getting jealous over someone else's freedom that they obviously took for granted was not befitting for someone like him...

Still, Hiccup wished he could at least interact with the girl. Just one moment would be worth all the years of being cooped up in the way from the worldâ€¦

Hiccup had not once realized that the last archway he perched on possessed a large crack in the middle. With his weight and the added pressure from the bashyball the arch broke in two and the cursed boy fell to the ground having little to no time to glide down to safety. He crash landed onto the ground with a noticeable thud.

"Owâ€¦" Hiccup breathed out quietly as he started to feel the added pain of the cowpat-smelling ball trapped between the floor and his stomach.

And he sticks the landing! Hiccup thought in a very sarcastic undertone. His disgruntled thoughts melted away when he realized something very important. He was not alone in the room. Through the dust that settled on the ground Hiccup could clearly see the girl's eyes staring right at him. Her eyes-shining like sapphires-looked at them with irises widened to a large degree. Blonde hair tied into a braid stuck to her skin from perspires. When she blinked (Hiccup would later assume it was due to the dust) the young Haddock battered his eyelashes along with her, having so much trouble into believing that this was all real and not a dream. He couldn't believe it but it was true he was staring face-to-face to an outsider.

A not too bad looking outsider. An annoying voice ribbed inside Hiccup's brain. He mentally shook those thoughts again completely dismayed of thinking such ridiculous things a second time that evening. Just when the girl breathed out a sigh Hiccup arched a brow in confusion. Was there something wrong? She seemed to have yawned but it sounded more like a gasp. Hiccup worried that she probably was either growing jaded by the situation they were in or worse, she breathed out a gasp of fear.

Hiccup was not going to let that happen, the last thing he wanted was anyone to have a great fear of him. Him being judged before they ever got the chance to truly know him; those were the fears implanted in his mind by his worried parents from long ago. Not desiring for the moment by misjudgment Hiccup had dragged his arm toward the ball and opened his mouth speak. At that very moment the girl made a shout of alarm and quickly fled the room not once turning back.

With the ability to run faster than a large animal, the skill to make a vertical takeoff, the strength five large men, and many other talents that Hiccup gained from his nightly transformations he did not make any movements to go after the girl. She had walked out right through the doors; of course he would not go after her. The bitterness of the situation fell unceremoniously on Hiccup's shoulders.

They slumped.

Rejection hurt, and hurt insufferably. The first human he had ever seen to in over two centuries had run away from him like the literal plague. Eventually he picked himself up and reluctantly cradled the ball in his arms before stocking away to the very place that was once his sanctuary, the very place that was a part of his home.

\* \* \*

><p>The Drum Tower was located on the south wall. Normally to get to the very top of the tower a person would have to climb up a win staircase so many flights that it was very tedious work to get to the end. It was one of these very rare moments that Hiccup valued the Curse that was placed upon him. With his sharp claws, and several vines that clustered all across the ivory tower. After two-hundred years those vines were strong enough to hold Hiccup up for once, even when he's turned into a three-hundred pound dragon-boy. His normal weight happens to be a good one hundred and seventy-five. He likes to keep it constant, mind you.<p>

Hiccup climbed up the wall effortlessly with the satchel twisting and flapping around his side like a thorn that wouldn't budge.

\_Just another thing I do on my exciting life. \_Hiccup dryly as his teeth grind from the added weight of the ball. It probably did weigh a ton from what Hiccup could speculate that of course made the climbing experience all the more irritable. Ten minutes past before Hiccup finally reached the top floor window. He slipped through the enlarged window with ease and re-entered his room.

The room was left exactly as he had earlier in the morning, the large four-poster bed carved by his own claws of dragons, a wardrobe carved in similar liking, a large throw rug made from bear furs slightly damaged by bite marks and quite notably large amounts of slobber, a wooden chair that was twice as small as Hiccup's current form, a handsome mahogany desk that stood parallel to the chair. But the one thing that Hiccup liked most about his room/tower were the walls. Every nook and cranny was covered with hundreds perhaps thousands of drawings, sketches, simple scribbles that all meant something to him. While Hiccup was forbidden to leave the castle during his old life, it did not stop him from watching the daily events surrounding and within the village. This was a trait that he continued using even after all these years.

Each drawing told the story in its own way with all of them being something that Hiccup had seen with his own two eyes. One drawing was very simple it was within the castle showing his mother and father sitting way near the grand fireplace. It was a very crude and simple drawing but one of the very first Hiccup ever made and his mother did say that she liked that drawing because of it, so he placed it right above his bed frame in respect of her wishes. There were many more drawings that Hiccup had drawn that he was far too tired to look over at the moment. He walked over to his desk, opened his satchel, unceremoniously picked up the ball from it and placed it on top with several other objects that it collected over the years.

While he looked down on his desk for a moment Hiccup noticed immediately of one sketch that he was currently in the process of finishing. The drawing was of a dragon that was not at all indented on his bed. This was a dragon that could not be found in the volumes that were located in the library nor any other place that was found inside the walls. It was the dragon that Hiccup should've been fearful of but wasn't. This dragon had very similar qualities to Hiccup's cursed form.

\*\*"I'm guessing my self-portrait isn't finished yet?" \*\*Hiccup turned the new voice in the room and smiled to see it was one of his oldest and most loyal of friends. Through the very window Hiccup had just

climbed in the unexpected guest crawled in without worry. A pair of reptilian eyes identical to Hiccup's own eyes shined fondly at the cursed boy.

The Night Fury beamed at Hiccup with a large mouthy grin that showed no teeth whatsoever.

"It's nice to see you too, Toothless." Hiccup smiled and placed a paw over the large dragon's head. The dragon-christened Toothless-smiled his namesake once more and affectionately nudged Hiccup's paw in return. \*\*"Just give me a few minutes and I should have that picture of yours done in no time."\*\*

The dragon chuckled. \*\*"Do you really think I came all this way for that? Tonight happens to be the first evening in the last few weeks with no clouds in the sky. It's more than perfect to fly out. Don't you want to stretch out your wings for a little bit? It'll be a real blast."\*\*

Hiccup arched one eyebrow and gave his companion a wiry smirk.\*\* "You do remember the last time he said something like that you ended up blowing a shot of your plasma blast at me. Unless you forgot the last time I flew with you." \*\*

His words sounded coarse and foreign, almost as though he was speaking in a different language. The truth was Hiccup did speak another language. The dialect of Dragonese was the language all dragons spoke. It had taken twenty years for Hiccup to learn enough of the words to speak in a conversation without sounding like a complete fool. His teacher of course was none other than the Night Fury that sat opposite of him standing. Toothless was someone Hiccup had met during a very delicate time in the cursed boy's life. It was an encounter both frightening and riveting.

On a cold night very much like the one the two were in now, Hiccup stood dangerously close to the ledge of his tower while he looked solemnly down below to the quiet village that had recently changed its name from Berk-en-Shire to Berkenshire. Honestly Hiccup didn't quite understand the reason for the change. It was practically the same as before only with a few alterations.

As he mulled over these thoughts and a few more distressing ones Hiccup heard a distant noise coming from the horizon. To the untrained eye all it would see would be the blackness of the night canopying over the inky blackness of the ocean north of the town. But to Hiccup, with his dragon eyes he was able to notice something else. What he saw appeared to be the outline for large black mass heading straight toward the castle. His territorial instincts involuntarily kicked in as Hiccup's large fangs retracted and he shot out a large fire blast.

Since all dragons were fireproof on the outside getting blasted left fairly minor injuries leaving the Night Fury with hardly any scrapes on him. Hiccup was very surprised from that encounter when he heard the dragon speak words in a garbled sentence that he almost understood a couple words. From what he gathered the Night Fury wasn't all that pleased that he lost his fish from the fireball Hiccup shot at him. In order to appease his new guest Hiccup offered a salted salmon that was originally locked away in a storeroom.

In a short period of time (and much fish digested later) both of the cursed boy and Night Fury ended up becoming fast friends. At least Hiccup assumed the dragon wanted friendship when he regurgitated the first fish given to him moments after swallowing it down and pushed the half eaten meal to Hiccup. When he-albeit reluctantly-chewed and ate the fish whole Hiccup unconsciously offered a smile to the dragon

That very exchange occurred only recently when after Hiccup stood by his desk and Toothless threw up two haddocks.

\_It's like he knows he's trying to tease me. \_Hiccup thought while grimacing at the drooled covered fish. **"Thanks, my friend but I'm not really all that hungry right now."** **"There was some truth to that excuse since Hiccup did lose his appetite from the apparent rejection he got earlier."**

Toothless rolled his eyes and stared at Hiccup blankly. **"You always say that."**

**"I still prefer cooked food before I eat it thank you."**

The naturally born Night Fury glanced at his cursed counterpart idly. **"You're weird like that you know."**

Hiccup sighed, **"Yeah I know."** **"He really did. With careful hands Hiccup picked up his charcoal pencil, straightened out the drawing and resumed his sketching. This was the norm of every night here in Haddock Castle. Night would fall, Hiccup would transform-losing one or two pairs of clothing in the process-he'd scale the night tower, then Toothless flies in to greet him, and the rest of the evening would continue as followed."**

**"Listen a couple of my mates and I were thinkin' of going to this farm where some new lambs had just started to fatten up and I thought-"**

**"No,"** **"Hiccup answered right off the bat, his eyes not leaving his soon-to-be masterpiece."**

Toothless whined. **"I didn't even get to finish."**

**"And I knew what you were going to ask me,"** **"the bipedal Night Fury replied. A moment later he began to mimic his companion's drawl in comedic fashion. "'Oh Hiccup, you'll really LOVE to come with me to this random place that has all the most tasty foodstuff around. Sure they'll be other dragons that know nothin' 'bout yooou~ but I'm sure they won't ask TOO many questions.'"**

The crouching Night Fury glared with a very unamused expression. **"I don't sound like that at all."**

Hiccup shrugged unflappably, his wings barely shifting for unrealized emphasis. **"It's not important, what's important is that you clearly don't remember that I'm not entirely a full dragon."**

**"You could if you wanted to."**

**"It doesn't work like that."** **"Hiccup tried to explain weakly. "If any of those dragons found out that I wasn't fully a dragon**

they would try to go after me. It's better for everyone, and for myself that I stay where I am."\*\*

Toothless gave Hiccup a calculating look before he said, "\*\*"So you're fine with staying cooped up in this place forever?" \*\*The Dragon shook his head. "\*\*"I've watched you, you know. I've seen you looking down from your tower some nights. You look down at the man village. Your face is full of longing almost likeâ€¦ you want to go there." \*\*The dragon made a face and disgust.

Hiccup paused at mid-stroke, his claws gripping the homemade pencil not as loose as before. He turned toward Toothless and frowned slightly. The look of grimace melted away into a more saddened mien. "\*\*"Both of my parents were human, Toothless. I am too, it's just-I am," \*\*he trailed off, his eyes staring deeply at the floor.

Toothless tilted his head so he appeared under Hiccup's gaze. "\*\*"You are not a boy, but you are not a dragon either."\*\*

Hiccup nodded. "\*\*"Do you understand now?"\*\*

\*\*"I do. I only wish you wanted to be a dragon more than one of those humans. They used to hunt my kind down for centuries, Hiccup." \*\*Toothless crooned unhappily, his round eyes widening with worry. "\*\*"I don't want you to do something crazy and try to mingle with them."\*\*

\*\*"But spending some quality time with ferocious fire-breathing reptiles is completely safe and non-life-threatening?" \*\*Hiccup made a snort of disbelief.

\*\*"It is with me around. I'll make sure none of the others find out about yourâ€¦ 'Condition.' They'll just see you as some odd-looking foreigner from-oh I don't know someplace from the East. I'm trying to say is, Hiccup, is that you have a chance to be accepted and I mean REALLY be accepted. You know how to walk like a dragon, to talk like one, and even think like one. \*\*

\*\*"Trust me when I say you have a very good chance by being welcomed by the other dragons. Can you at least think about it?" \*\*

Hiccup attempted one of his easy-going smiles and quickly interjected Toothless' suggestion. "\*\*"I need to finish that drawing of yours sooner than later. Otherwise I'll be up all night again."\*\*

Toothless rolled his eyes and grumbled throatily. He knew when a conversation wanted to be dropped.

\* \* \*

><p>It had taken Hiccup another half hour to coax Toothless into leaving for the sheep raid without him. Such a shame to since lamb happened to be one of his favorite meats. Digressing over this issue Hiccup resumed staring out the window, the very saying Toothless warned him about not doing.<p>

While the dragon may never truly understand about Hiccup's inner thoughts he would have at least noticed the dragon-boy's fascination



with them. Hiccup didn't know why there was something about the human race that he enjoyed watching. While he was very much aware of how brutish and how occupationally hazardous they tend to be, humans still found a way to be creative and thought provoking to counter all that negativity. They built homes, made their own food, lived in large communities for the sake of being with others and nothing else; and the last part that somewhat had to do with the previous mentioning was socializing.

To be with others was the one thing that Hiccup was denied for so many years. It was the one thing's parents denied him. He knew the reason; he understood it day by day as each night passed but he wished. Oh, how he wished it was all different. All this wishing led to the unforeseen desire to hope. He hoped that one day he would live in a world where people withâ€ Differences could be accepted for who they were on the inside. From what he observes up in his tower Hiccup could see there were many different types of people in the village. There were tall people, short people, fat, skinny, old, young, and even people with missing limbs. All of them had a place, a purpose, some form of acceptance in that little town.

On a night like this, this very night Hiccup watched the few stragglng runners on the field beside his castle, that non-extinguishable flicker of hope roared inside him like a ball of fire. He wondered what it would be like if that girl-that loud screaming girl that jumped away at the last second an hour before-had stayed and learned to accept him like she did with her own kind.

\_Oh yeah sure, that'll happen. And after we become the best of chums we can have Afternoon Tea with Toothless.\_ Hiccup sighed unhappily. Even his own conscience was being cynical to his hopes and dreams. Whether it was his own feelings or his dragon instincts acting up again Hiccup by the sudden urge to throw something at a wall. He prepared to chuck the object he fidgeted in his hands moments before just when he realized it was the very thing that started the whole problem to begin with. He was holding the heavy ball in his paws.

\_I swear it's like it's mocking me.\_ Hiccup looked at the ball with bitterness until his eyes flickered back towards the field when he noticed the shifting specks were no longer going about in a circle but heading towards one of the rectangular shaped buildings that was clustered near a larger one. He realized that his brief form of entertainment was over once the lights that illuminated the field turned off a few minutes later. Even from his high viewpoint Hiccup was able to glimpse at the unhappy looks that were plastered on the runners' faces. One phase was much more noticeable than the others as it was Loud-Screaming girl stocking away with a look that was very unreadable to Hiccup. He was unsure if she was upset about the ball missing or-the flicker of hope came back-she was thinking about the events that took place not so long ago. That last thought was soon tossed away when Hiccup grasped at how ridiculous that sounded. He tapped a claw on the ball as his lips pursed into thought.

His dragon instincts told him to simply ignore the ball and girl and resume his life the way it was before. The more logical thought process told Hiccup at different idea. The ball was clearly of some great importance to the girl and to a lesser extent the other people of her age group. If the girl was more than willing to go into the castle one time to get the ball back he would be certain she would probably try and go back again and the next time with maybe

reinforcements that carried heavy artillery. While the later part of the thought sounded rather askew it still made Hiccup shiver in nervousness. Either way Hiccup would feel his moral ethics being disturbed. In a last-ditch effort Hiccup finally came up with an idea so bold, so dangerous, so stupid, that it would easily be mistaken for pure insanity.

\* \* \*

><p><em>Someday I might see this as a fiendishly clever plan. <em>Hiccup thought sarcastically with feigned optimism. His clever plan involved him writing a letter for Loud-Screaming girl (the name stuck with Hiccup for reasons explained earlier) to warn her the dangers of throwing a ball into a window and taking proper safety measures in order to avoid those dangers. The other part of the plan was the most difficult for Hiccup to think about but knew it had to be done.

He was to go outside of the castle walls and walk toward a human's house.

As much as Hiccup did heed his parents' warnings to never leave the castle there came a time when precaution needed to be thrown to the wind and do what needed to be done. He made sure the right essentials were to be brought for this expedition. Pants and a buttoned vest were a must when he was to go into public. Hopefully Hiccup would not come across anyone in particular but his mother always told him that dressing impeccably was important when meeting people, whether intentional or not. He picked out a pair of dark brown trousers that went nicely with the dark green vest he had made along with the pants. Both of them were designed and stitched precisely so they could be comfortable to wear while under the influence of the Transformation. He had sadly forgotten to change into them before sunset when his mind got preoccupied with the unexpected arrival of a certain blond-haired guest.

\_Wait how should I sign as? \_A new thought bubble presided over Hiccup's mind.\_ Can't put 'Prince Hiccup,' not only would that lead to questioning but make me sound pretentious, and just calling me by my name would lead to instant humiliation. 'The Master of Haddock Castle' does have a nice ring to it but still draws too much attention to myself.\_ Personally, Hiccup thought most of the names did not suit him well. He never saw himself as royalty, despite technically being one. He \*\*did \*\*look after the castle and made sure everything was taken care of but being a master meant he led others to do the work instead of him. Scratch that one off the list. He didn't consider himself as a monarch, he was no one's master, and all he could do was look after the home and care for it when others were too afraid to do so.

\_Wait that's it! I'm the castle caretaker.\_ Hiccup concluded with some form of satisfaction. He penned his new self-proclaimed title with feverish delight.

Hiccup finished the last flourish of his left wrist with precision as he placed an olden fountain pen on the side of his desk. He held up the written paper to inspect for any grammatical errors of any kind (his handwriting and spelling happened to be flawless, thank you very much). When he spotted none (naturally) Hiccup folded the paper into thirds, melted a red wax seal on to the final fold, and placed the

letter into the satchel along with the ball.

Hiccup climbed up a makeshift ladder that he made himself up to the roof of the tower. He pushed open a trapdoor that led to the top and looked over at the starry night above him and the sleeping town below.

\_All right I can do this. I'll just think of it as a leisurely stroll down the courtyard and nothing else.\_ Despite that idea Hiccup felt a great unsettling feeling coil in his stomach. The very thought of leaving-even if for ten minutes-was impossible to bear. Even with the motivation of doing a righteous thing Hiccup still had some second thoughts. His parents didn't press into his mind about staying in the castle for nothing; there were still many people around who would react badly to the way he looked. The Loud-Screaming girl was enough proof for that. If he wasn't careful enough his whole fragile world might common crashing down on him.

\_I will only be gone for a moment. I won't be breaking any rules if no one sees me. It's practically a hop and a skip away from the castle.\_ Hiccup thought reassuringly. The village was far less than a kilometer from the castle after all and with flying he should make it back before being missed.

That is if anyone would miss him.

Once he shook that bitter thought away Hiccup stood atop a battlement and spread his wings. With one hand he took out the bashyball and brought it close to his face. He inhaled the fleeting sent of vanilla, a small smile twitched for a moment before he placed the ball back into the satchel. Keeping the scent fresh in his memory Hiccup crouched down to feel the wind on his face. If someone were to look up at the castle they would have mistaken him for a large gargoyle. In barely an eighth of a second Hiccup detected the aroma. With a slight smirk Hiccup took a deep breath to both ready himself and to get a stronger whiff and then jumped into the air and glided breezily through the sky.

If there was one thing Hiccup truly accepted about his 'condition,' flying became the first thing on the very small list. The sky is beyond doubt a grand sight to behold. Nothing came close to the feeling of freedom and joy that swelled inside him. The wind blew across his face wonderfully while his hair was all over the place and his bangs nearly covered his face a few times. He jerked his head around slightly to move the fringe of auburn hair away while he kept his eyes focused to the ground and his nose focusing toward the smell.

\_I better make a landing sooner than later. I wouldn't want to crash into anything valuable.\_ In a matter of seconds Hiccup landed on the ground without a hitch. He smiled pleasingly when he smelled the scent at its 's strongest point. The dragon-boy was on a pathway made from that substance he had read about that was calledâ€|tar if he remembered correctly. Luckily the tar he was standing on happened to be solid, so no worries of scalding to death. There were several houses around him that despite no longer made from the same materials he recalled seeing on houses from when he was a child; Hiccup noted that they barely changed in size and shape even if the design was greatly shifted. One house in particular drew his attention with the familiar scent of vanilla practically emitting from the pathway

toward the front door to the inside of the home.

Hiccup wondered for a moment where he should place the ball and note until he heard a faint sound behind him. It was the sound feet marching over the tar path from the echoing sounds Hiccup guessed that there were two people coming down the road. Swiftly Hiccup removed the ball and letter from the bag, hastily placed them beside the oddly made white fence that surrounded the vanilla-smelling house and scrambled over to the opposite side of the road where a large brick wall stood facing that he climbed over and hid away from the stomping feet.

With one of his keen ears placed on the brick Hiccup could hear the conversation between the two unseen figures.

"â€|all I'm saying is that I 'eard something between a group youngsters talkin' 'bout that castle earlier." The voice sounded like a gruff male well into his late thirties, according to Hiccup's speculation.

The other voice belonged to a man with identical speech patterns with a voice much harsh sounding as if the man had been known to barking orders. He sounded like he was scowling as he talked, "What yer spewing out now is nothin' but nonsense. Ye sure none of them were jaked on a hauf?"

The first man grunted some sort of profanity Hiccup was unfamiliar with. "I know fer a fact that none of those kids were blootered. Belch wouldn't live to see the day his 'Star Players' getting drunk off their arses. Somethin' smells rotten in Berkenshire, and those kids are meddling in to somethin' you and I know mustn't be meddled in."

The other man sighed, admitting defeat. "Very well, ye think it's so important I'll make a 'special' appearance at the school tomorrow. S'bout time I should make an appearance, aye?"

"He-he, I don' see why not, \*\*mayor\*\*." Hiccup did not like that tone the first man was using. He couldn't help but feel something heavy hanging in the air.

"I bid ye a goodnight, \*\*principal\*\*." More chuckling was heard between the two that did not sound the least bit friendly toward Hiccup. Once he heard the laughter growing fainter after a minute passed Hiccup did not waste time he spread his wings and fly quickly as he could back home.

\_Those two gentlemen did not feel like warm company.\_ Hiccup flapped his wings hurriedly as he spotted the castle over the village square and far beyond the opposite direction of the Stone Arch.\_ It's better for me to stay where I belong. \_

Without another word Hiccup landed on the top of a familiar drum tower and climbed through the safe sanctuary that was his home for over two hundred years.

\* \* \*

><p>Morning came abruptly with sunlight breaking through the arch window in Hiccup's room. He awoke with a puff of air showing his

distaste for how early it was. His green eyes creaked open while his body voluntarily pushed forward and he sat up period. The dragon-boy started to wipe the sleep from his eyes when he duly noted that he now had hands again and his nails were no longer at talons and his skin was the favorable light peach with freckles peppered around accordingly. As he yawned Hiccup stretched newly transformed body and then pushed the covers away from his bed and climbed out with his human feet hitting the rug beside the foot.<p>

Hiccup climbed out of his bed and then walked over to the wardrobe. He donned the same trousers he wore the other night since they weren't filthy but put on a different shirt. He picked the first tunic he reached and pulled his arms through the armsayes. After he adjusted his shirt Hiccup made a quick mental list of today's chores and began to do them with a slow pace.

Being the unofficial-official caretaker to a castle wasn't always fun and games but Hiccup had to make due. Sometimes when he was really bored he would make a sport of breaking a record for cleaning the most out of one day. The usual routine started with making the bed and straightening out the sheets. Before he started though Hiccup made sure to sniff them in case they needed to be cleaned. When he didn't smell anything foul Hiccup resumed the chores with the same haste as before.

The wooden floors needed a good scrub and polish, forcing Hiccup to climb down the tedious amount of stairs. He reached the castle courtyard that was-no surprise-well landscaped with a moderately large water well in the middle. Using a bucket the boy pulled the water up, wearying him down in the process. It was rare moments like these Hiccup did wish that the great strength he gained while a Night Fury still lingered after the Transformation. After he got a full bucket's worth of water Hiccup climbed up the stairs back to the tall tower where his high room resided.

He brushed the floors with a broom and swept all the dust outside the window before he placed some soap in the water and began to scrub. Hiccup scrubbed at the floor until all but most of the grime from the week washed away and it dried up enough for the polish. The boy polished and polished until he could see his own face in the reflection. A part of him was almost tempted to flex what little muscles he had but quickly realized that was very vain. He already broke his parents' promise the last thing he wanted was to commit another sin, even a redundant one as vanity.

The ritual of floor cleaning continued with the other levels in the tower and then the main parts of the castle. By nine o'clock Hiccup had finished with all the wood floors. In a celebratory mood Hiccup picked some rarer herbs to spice his morning oatmeal and collected a red, juicy apple to munch on the side. He laid down on the very same tree and smiled contently at the wonderful day that was beginning to form before him.

The sun broke through the clouds for the first time in weeks with its warming rays heating the ground Hiccup sat on. His toes wiggled happily from the warmth and played with a few blades of grass that had some lingering droplets of dew. Several wildflowers had their buds opened wide for honeybees and butterflies to collect the nectar while a few birds flew from their respected nests to capture a few worms that were unlucky enough to still be hanging around on the

surface.

The flowers were something Hiccup took the most care in looking after. The ones that were protected from bugs and parasites were the beautiful climbing roses that clung desperately to the stonewalls. They were his mother's favorite from long ago and she always loved keeping them pruned and watered. The ones that bloomed the most were the light pink roses that had a magenta tint near the petals' pink tips and started out in white at the bottom. And their smell-dare Hiccup would say-smelled heavenly. They emitted a light perfume that was not overpowering in the slightest and tickled the nose just enough that it didn't get irritating after a moment or two.

\_The Anniversary is almost coming up. \_Hiccup remembered after a while later. \_Perhaps she would be happy if I placed one of the roses for her. Mother always did like looking at them when we went on strolls through here.\_

Hiccup went over to look at the flowers more clearly in order to see which ones were the best looking and smelled the nicest without the scents coming out too strong.

\_These look nice, \_Hiccup settled with three roses that had no blemishes to see. \_"I will pluck these from the vines once the day before the Anniversary arrives, that way they will still be in bloom whenâ€¦|\_

Hiccup's thoughts trailed off when his ears picked up a new sound. In order to see where the commotion was coming from Hiccup hurried over to a small hole that broke through the wall. It was small enough for no one to suspect a person peeking through if they did not pay attention to that particular spot, but it was large enough for Hiccup to see everything taking place over a distance.

\_Constablesâ€¦| \_Hiccup grimaced, he never liked it when they trespassed over the castle, acting like they owned the place. It was always his home and no one else's, no written doctrine could say otherwise. \_What on Earth and Midgar do they want?\_

A half dozen or so policemen stood near the front with their automobiles rumbling like purring kittens, but that didn't comfort Hiccup even in the slightest. Another car soon rolled up the gravel road. It looked much different from the ones the constables rode in; the model was sleeker, more slender in style in contrast to the older cars parked alongside the road.

"Mayor SkÃ¶ll," the finely dressed Copper that Hiccup assumed was the Chief constable dispatched toward the man coming out of the sleek car. More constables joined the other two, inhibiting Hiccup's view. All he could see were boots and muddy shoes across the lawn.

\_How fantastic. I can't even hear most of them now with the other ones in the way. \_Hiccup frowned sourly, before pushing himself to the ground to sit cross-legged and folded his arms with a very dignified pout. \_Twice something interesting happens around here and I get an obscure view for the latter. Why can't they just leave so I can hear those two men?\_ A revelation slowly coursed through Hiccup.\_ Wow, I actually sounded like a sounded like a spoiled prince just nowâ€¦|.so that's where that phrase comes from. Hmm.\_

Suddenly Hiccup's pondering went away when a new sound was added into the mix. He turned over toward the other side of the field where he heard the noise coming from further down the south wall that faced the town. It was much easier to scale over that part of the wall with the apple tree right beside it for Hiccup to scale up to the top.

Hiccup was able to scan the area much clearly then before with the exception of the constables being further away and hardly audible to his ears. His eyes narrowed down when he pinpointed slight movement in the tall grass. For a moment Hiccup initially thought that a small rapid was scurrying through the field before he saw something he never thought he would see again.

\_Can it be? This is not of it all be a great sick allusion. \_Despite Hiccup's denial what he was seeing was indeed true.

Crawling out of the grass was not a rabbit or small mammal of any sort but Loud-Screaming girl sneaking away from the constables' 'trained eyes,' carrying a silver cylinder-like object and one hand, and slide underneath the broken window to the basement.

\_Oh, sweet merciful son of God and Odinson. This **\*\*really\*\*** cannot be happening!\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Well there I go ending it one a cliffhanger. Ain't I a stinker? XD Yeah, this is pretty cruel of me but seeing how it's 11 my time here I can't really write any more so I apologize. But on the bright side you all got a Hiccup-centered chapter this time around. That has to count for something right? Anyway I am very grateful for the reviews that I've gotten so far, 16 reviews and only three chapters. Wow just wow guys I'm very pleased that you are enjoying the whole ride. I will try and get more stuff out but you know what college and all it can be sparing whenever I get another chapter completely done. But I am not abandoning this story don't worry.

**\*\*Jaked/blooter- meaning being drunk.\*\***

**\*\*Hauf- a measurement of whiskey. \*\***

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 5. Going Down the Rabbit Hole (again)

**\*\*Q-A: \*\***Well, to say the quick responses I got from the last chapter was wonderful. And that is an understatement. :D You all make me VERY happy to know that this story is doing so well. And for future reference all the chapters' titles will be based on songs and mostly their titles as well. The song that this chapter is named after is partially the inspiration for this chapter, but mostly for the curiosity of going back to do something despite it being dangerous and unsafe. If you catch my drift that is. XD

**\*\*Responses to Guest Reviews:\*\***

\_DragonBoy (Guest):\_ I am happy you like the story. :D And the guest

nameâ€¦ I enjoy very much. XDD

\_somebody:\_ O.o Iâ€¦.honestly don't know what you asked for in your review but I'll take a knock at it. First Astrid didn't steal anything from Hiccup. What she has in her hands will be explained in this chapter ( : \ I'm surprised that it became the concern for other reviewers to be honest). Next Hiccup's entire curse will be explained in the story so I can't spoil anything right now. Sorry. As for what universe this story is taking in once again you'll have to wait and see. And finally, chapter 4 took half of its place on the day on chapter 3 but is now the day after it, or in Hiccup's case the afternoon later on.

**\*\*Disclaimer:\*\*** The story is mine (well you know, most of it XDDD) but no characters aren't mine either. If it were the case I would make the Dragon film series be more than a trilogy. But hey, let's not count the chickens before they hatch and get on with this story!

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Going Down the Rabbit Hole (again)<strong>

August 24th, 2010 (morning at the Hofferson household) ~

If someone were to ask Astrid to sum up her day in one word the first thing out, into her mind would be, headache. Just a headache, because that's all she had from start to finish was a throbbing head and a whole lot of information that just was filling inside her brain far too quickly. From when she woke out of bed she had a splitting pain in her skull that no amount of ibuprofen was able to cure. It was so distracting that she almost missed a question her father asked while eating at the kitchen table for breakfast. He had asked her how Bashyball practice went.

"It went fine, Dad." Astrid muttered into her oatmeal, her eyes staring blankly at the table.

Erik Hofferson wasn't a very talkative person. He was a man that believed actions spoke louder than words, a trait that he unexpectedly passed on to his daughter. Since she was practically his spitting image-save for the fact her hair was a lighter blond than his was and her blue eyes were inherited from her mother-he was able to tell when Astrid really meant what she said or was hiding something within her.

"I heard from Gobber that you had to do extra laps which explains why you were late."

Astrid inwardly winced. She should've known that Gobber would call her dad. He wasn't considered everyone's uncle for nothing. In hopes of preventing the uncomfortable conversation to steer into the wrong direction Astrid kept her stoic upfront and kept her face impassive.

"Jus' had a little screw up with 'im fer losing the ball."

"-The same ball that that you were carrying last night?" Her father quickly interjected.



Astrid breathed out a very small sigh. She nodded carefully, "Aye, that that one." She trailed off for a moment, thinking her next words cautiously and came up with a decent excuse.

"Ruff' nicked it while Gobber wasn't looking and snuck away before I could look fer it. 'Turned out she did it behind some bushes at the end of the field and I found it after practice. It was already too late in the evening fer me to give the ball back to Gobber, so I brought it back home to give it to 'im today at school."

Erik held a thoughtful look for a minute while taking the whole story in.

\_Please buy it. Please buy it. \_Astrid chanted in the back of her mind. She knew that the lie she had just said wouldn't be impossible to believe since everyone in the village knew of Ruffnut's mischievous behavior since only she and her brother were always playing tricks like two partners in crime. So logically Ruffnut sneaking a baseball underneath Gobber's nose would not sound far-fetched. The last thing she wanted was for her father to know about her little outing to Haddock Castle. Not only would she be grounded until she died but never get the chance to meet 'Mr. Castle Care-taker' as she had started to call the mysterious ball bringer and sarcastic note writer.

After what felt like an eternity Erik made a jerk with his head, a sign of conceding defeat. "Does sound right to me. Better tell Gobber the truth if this happens a second time though."

Astrid nodded. "Right, dad." She scarfed down the remaining porridge and carried it over to the sink to wash later. After grabbing her bag Astrid bid her father a goodbye and headed straight for the door until-

"'Strid." Her father called out in that little nickname of hers that Astrid secretly loathed but was too polite to let him know that.

"Yeah, dad."

"The knot on yer tie is crooked. Better fix before headin' off fer school."

Astrid tilted her head and low to behold saw that her tie was indeed tied haphazardly. With an annoyed sigh of how easy her father could point out things from her, Astrid fastened the tie again with it being straightened out properly and giving the professional look against her unwrinkled uniform. It was school dress code to have an orderly uniform at all times. Even getting a ketchup stain on the blouse meant a demerit. Astrid gave her appearance one last quick look of inspection before she finally went through the door and left, heading toward the school.

The walk to school took little less than ten minutes to arrive at the front gate from Astrid's house. That allotted time and distance gave the girl many opportunities to admire the scenery but with her attention span sparing hardly any for pretty-looking plants wasn't important to her.

\_At least it's quite out.\_ Astrid mused while she adjusted her

rucksack. On a brick wall two her right a large thumping noise came along with a shrill squeak and an immediate groan of pain. Camicazi Bog picked herself up with minimal effort with her hair, and uniform, in a disheveled mess as usual.

"How are yoo on this fine mornin'?" Came the loud bellowing from the shorter blonde, not showing any heed to the half dozen birds she had just sent off in alarm.

\_Guess I spoke too soon.\_ Astrid turned; Camicazi walked beside her with a spring in her step and twigs tangled in her hair along with a few unknown objects that Astrid preferred not to learn what they truly were.

While keeping a straight face Astrid replied to the question previously asked. "It's been better."

Camicazi glanced at the taller girl before he continued. "Did ja have a spout with yer dad?"

Astrid's walking paused for a moment before she continued, acting as though nothing changed. Nothing that had been said penetrated through her. "I didn' have a go with 'im. Mah Da and I are **\*\*fine\*\***." She stressed. "Don't be daft, Cami."

Camicazi rolled her eyes playfully but soon became serious. "I'm not daft jus' hopin' things are all right and all. Nothin' with making a conversation now is it?"

"No," Astrid admitted. "But you need to learn what can be asked and what can't. There is nothin' wrong with mah dad and me. Why bother asking anyways? I never saw you as somebody who cared about someone's domestic life."

"Mah mum wanted me to ask."

"Ah," Astrid replied with a slight nod. Bertha was good friends with Astrid's mother back when she still alive. Brenda Hofferson was there for Bertha after the tragic loss of her husband; she had made meals for the mourning woman and spent extended time over at the Bog home excusing that she was bringing Astrid along for a play-date, hence the friendship between her and Camicazi. When Brenda lost her life long after Astrid was seven Bertha and her daughter became a big presence to the remaining Hoffersons. She immediately became a surrogate aunt for Astrid.

"She'll be glad to know everything is fine at the Hofferson residence."

"I'll be glad to report that then." Cami replied with a head lifted up in satisfaction. Even in the early morning she was still a haughty little thing.

\* \* \*

><p>The rest of the gang stood by the front gates, per usual to the days before they started First Year together. Well except Camicazi of course.<p>

"Did any of yoo guys get tossed up by yer parent like me and Ruff the

other night?" Tuffnut asked exasperatedly.

"My mum wasn't all too thrilled about me bring out so late," Fishlegs answered. "Even though I told her I was still at the school she still looked hysterical."

"I don't what the big deal is, it's not like any of us died. That castle is just stupid, who would name it after some fish anyway."

"How do you know, Snotlout?" Tuffnut asked in his bored tone. "We all know Astrid was the one that went into the castle. She knows what's up with that place, right?"

Astrid mentally groaned at Tuffnut's rare showing of perception. All eyes turned to her. For the first time in her life, Astrid wished she didn't have so much attention placed on her.

"Nothing happened to me when I went inside. The only thing that really almost killed me was boredom and nothing else. So I suggest we drop the subject like a useless axe and get on with our lives." The last part came out in a borderline snarl as Astrid scowled with bared teeth. She was not in a mood to bring up the castle again.

"Whoa, no need to go savage on us." Ruffnut joked.

Astrid was reminded of wild green eyes for just a moment. She pinched the bridge of her nose to hide her momentary distinction of weakness.

"The point is the castle is old news and doesn't need to be concerned by the likes of us." Astrid crossed her arms, making herself look determined and strong even though she didn't honestly feel any of it. "The least we can do is forget all of this nonsense and focus on what's really important."

\_At least until I get mah hands on 'Mr. Castle Care-taker.' The last thing I want is for everyone to crowd me when I go back there.

\_Astrid still had every intention of going to Castle Haddock but she did not want her friends to be involved. The matter between her and that-thatâ€¦.care-taker person was between them and no one else. She was not going to let anything get in her way-

RING!

Well, except maybe school.

"Oi, useless mollusks!" Gobber called out cheerfully, his right stump waving toward the gang. His face looked grim as his steely eyes brimmed with concern that was absolutely foreign to Astrid and the others. "Ye all need ta' come inside. Principal wants ta' speak with everyone."

After exchanging confused looks with everyone Astrid was the first to head to where Gobber was as he hurried along to the hastily made assembly hall in the gym. "Whazgooinon, Gobber?" Astrid asked rather quickly and she felt foolish for sounding so worried.

"I dunno," Gobber replied with a shrug. "We'll jus' 'ave ta' wait and see what 'His Almighty-ness' is gonna go talk about this time."

Astrid hide a smile. It was no secret that Gobber wasn't at all friendly with the principal. With both of them sharing different values, morals, and ideas on education they both begrudgingly worked together since Gobber wanted to keep his job and the principal was friends with the mayor.

"It'll probably be some dull assembly on avoiding drugs." Astrid shrugged her own shoulders having seen every school assembly in the past nine years.

"Nah, if I was I would've been told of it. Something's not right and I'm not sure it's good to draw too much attention, aye?" Gobber looked warningly at Astrid and jerked his head toward the others who were tagging along behind them. The twins threw each other into a headlock while Fishlegs tried to break them apart with little success. Camicazi noticed some old pipes hanging from the ceiling and started to imagine them as a jungle gym. Heather was the one that kept the younger girl from climbing on them, much to the blonde's frustration. Snotlout was being Snotlout with him strutting down the hall like he owned the place. The same old morning routine from them all but nothing Astrid could note as expelling material.

"I'm sure it'll be fine." Astrid answered with a bare hint of hesitation.

"I'm sure it will." Gobber insisted, arms waving. "But it'd be better ta' stay on yer toes fer the rest of the day. I 'ave no idea what's in store fer this gatherin' but it doesn't sound promisin'" When another faculty member passed by and whispered something into Gobber's ear he said to Astrid. "Need to be headin' off now. Teachers sit in their place ya know."

Astrid nodded, still knowing perfectly well about the basic protocol that occurred at assemblies.

"See ye soon enough." Gobber waved once before he trudged ahead with the other teachers.

\* \* \*

><p>"I really hope the assembly isn't about us." Fishlegs whispered a few minutes later after they settled into the bleachers.<p>

The gymnasium was fairly large in size, more than big enough to house the whole school during assemblies such as this one. Students were divided by the year they were in with the youngest ones at the bottom row with the last one on top. Astrid and the other S4's were near the middle between the third and fifth years. The location wasn't that entirely ideal since the upperclassmen thought lowly of the students below their year and the underclassmen had the tendency to try and sneak around to sit with the higher classes they weren't in to look important or to stir up some trouble. Snotlout and Camicazi were prime examples of this since he wanted to appear cooler and Cami wanted to sit with her mates. Naturally both of them ended up getting scolded by the school librarian who just happened to have made his rounds when he caught the two of them.

"Nothing like that will happen, 'Legs." Ruffnut replied, her tone sounding bored, as she wasn't allowed to pound on her brother at the moment. Astrid felt some sympathy for her friend since Fishlegs was

the type of guy who tended to let his mouth wander for hours on time talking about useless facts that had nothing to do with anything. Thankfully both blond girls were spared from the suffering when the principal \*\*finally\*\* appeared before the gym court. His rectangular mustache and matching goatee formed an expressionless frown that Astrid swore was permanently glued to his face. He tapped on the microphone stand in front of him before the loud obnoxious sound resonated across the large room.

"Good morning students. I hope your second week of school has been eventful. It's good to see all of you with your smiling faces down at me."

\_Why does it sound like that he really doesn't mean what he's saying? \_Astrid made a quick glance with her eyes around the room and noticed vigilantly that no one had any cheerful expressions, like Ruffnut everyone looked too tired or bored to care what he was saying.

"We've got ourselves a special guest joining us for today so give a round of applause to our esteemed mayor, SkÃ¶ll."

The response was both ways ecstatic and surprise coming from most of the students and teachers. They had no idea Mayor SkÃ¶ll would come to the school. It was at the beginning of the first week of term but never any other ones. Astrid wasn't sure how to react to this as she sat near the edge of her seat.

Mayor SkÃ¶ll was a man in his mid-forties with a strong build, though not as wide as Gobber (Astrid thought that no one could be big as him). Like most of the men in Berkenshire SkÃ¶ll had an impressive beard that grayed slightly, but striking nonetheless. He carried himself in a very high stature that made him look more menacing than friendly with his clean-cut suit freshly ironed and his hair combed and well groomed.

"Thank you for the introduction, Principal Savage." SkÃ¶ll chuckled throatily with good humor. "And I must say, coming back here again this term is quite an honor. Yer all the hope of the town after all."

\_Which is his way of saying, 'I'm so glad you all can be future voters for me' \_Astrid thought while hiding away a knowing smile. SkÃ¶ll was the type of man that didn't care how people looked at him as long as they respected him. Well, feared and respectedâ€¦ well, feared.

"But as much as I like you all there's one thing I can't standâ€¦ and those are \*\*troublemakers\*\*."

Small whispers were heard around Astrid and Fishlegs could be seen whimpering and shaking like a flopping fish on land. \_Something's not right. \_

"Troublemakers, the very word makes my blood boil." SkÃ¶ll paced back and forth while still remaining close to the mike. "You see I was kindly informed by yer principal the other night that someone in this school had the bright idea of going somewhere they know isn't supposed to be gone into. One of you entered in to Haddock Castle."

Mayor SkÃ¶ll was more than kind enough to let the students and faculty whisper and mutter their surprise as Astrid felt a large weight fell on her shoulders and had the sudden urge to collapse. \_They found out. Somehow they found out.\_

"There is a reason the city council passed the law to forbid us all from goin' in there." SkÃ¶ll continued. "It's not a sound place to visit. The floors are unstable; broken glass is everywhere, and it's right next to the cliffs. It would be an awful shame if one of you fell down off of one of the battlements by mistake."

\_Funny that he hasn't mentioned anything about the so-called curse on the place. \_Astrid wiped her eyes tiredly. She was finding something off with SkÃ¶ll's claims about Haddock Castle being unsafe. While she was inside the castle Astrid felt the cobblestone floors and did not find them the least bit unsteady below her feet. She also saw no broken glass or other dangerous objects in the sort. It was surprisingly clean despite a few spider-webs hanging from the archways. Astrid's thoughts went away when Ruffnut tapped her shoulder. With a jerk from her head Ruff' motioned Astrid to listen to the next part.

\_What's wrong with me? I don't lose focus that quickly.\_

"All I'm asking from you is yer complete and total, support into someâ€| questioning over this whole ordeal. Jus' a few minutes of yer time this month should do, and we can get to the bottom of this." He carried on with more news that did not settle the thick coils that roped around seven teenagers stomachs.

The whispering ended up becoming louder.

\* \* \*

><p>"I'm so angry right now. Who does the mayor think he is bossing us around?"<p>

Heather gave Snotlout an incredulous. "Because he's the mayor. Anything he says kinda goes, Snotlout."

"He's just sore 'cause his dad lost the last election to SkÃ¶ll." Tuffnut snickered, unintentionally insulting his friend. Snotlout's face only got redder since after his 'talk' with the librarian. Camicazi had recovered quicker on the other hand while she did a few cartwheels along the school courtyard during their lunch break. Fourth years had the pleasure of sharing the same lunch schedule with younger students.

Fishlegs tried to brighten the mood. "You know, Snotlout, yer father, Spitelout, did almost win if it weren't fer theâ€| substantial victory on SkÃ¶ll's behalf."

"Isn't that pretty much saying that SkÃ¶ll had a landslide victory while 'Lout's dad was dead last?" Ruffnut arched an eyebrow while sighing at the ground still looking bored as ever.

"I am so hurting you!" Snotlout shouted at Fishlegs five seconds as both of them quickly ran erratically across the ground. "With mah face!"

"Ruffnut why?!" Fishlegs wheezed in terror after evading a solid punch from Snotlout.

The female Thorston smirked evilly as she watched both idiots running around. "Because seeing you sacred looking is fun."

"Hey I wanna be part of the action!" Tuffnut said stupidly before he joined in the chase. For some bizarre, reason Camicazi joined them as well but she ran along side Fishlegs giving him words of encouragement which sounded more like sexist jabs than anything else.

Casually, Astrid walked over to where Ruffnut sat and plopped down next to her.

"Ruff," the blonde in question titled her head over to show she was paying Astrid attention. "Can I talk to yoo about something?"

The blonde made a snorting sound before replying, "Well seeing how you just talked to me should be it right?"

\_How obnoxious, why am I here again? Oh right, 'cause Camicazi is too busy playing chase and Heather would warn me what I am planning is an idiotic idea.\_ Astrid did not hold the scowl away though as she rolled her eyes. "You know, when yer not hanging out with yer twin, yoo actually say some smart-alecky things."

Ruffnut chuckled slightly. "Gotta keep the appearance that I'm stupid around him so he doesn't try to out do me in that department."

Astrid smirked with slight amusement. "Yoo really are evil, but I can bet yoo can keep a good secret right?"

Ruffnut shrugged "Depends on how secretive it is."

"Enough that yoo \*\*don't \*\*tell yer brother about it."

Despite the coolness of keeping a secret away from her bonehead of a brother Ruffnut still groaned overdramtically. "Fi-i-i-i-ne. I won't tell anyone."

"Good, I was planning on going to Haddock Castle; today after school."

An actual spit-take occurred when Ruffnut nearly choked on her water. "What? Yer gonna go back there?"

"Keep it down," Astrid harshly whispered to her friend. "Yes. I'm going back there and fer a good reason."

"Like~?" Ruffnut dragged out, hoping to get an answer.

Astrid shifted her eyes to where Heather was and noticed the black-haired girl wasn't paying any attention to their way. Astrid pulled her rucksack close to her and unzipped it wide enough to take out the very contents. Ruffnut's eyes nearly bugged out when she saw the bashyball in Astrid's hands.

"No way, you actually have it?" Ruffnut snarled before shoving Astrid. "Why did ya keep all this damn time when we all had to do laps!"

"Shush," Astrid whispered harshly. "Not so loud. Look I didn't have this ball with me when I got back. Don't you remember that I said I didn't have it?"

"Well it's in yer bloody hands right now-"

"-Because some weirdo left at my house last night." Astrid snapped.

Ruffnut's eyebrows vanished underneath her bangs. "Whoa. You mean someone actually had the guts to sneak to yer home and leave the ball there?" She smirked in admiration for that brave, thickheaded person. "Wicked."

Astrid sighed, "Yer missing the point Ruff this 'somebody,'" she motioned her fingers, using air quotes. "-wasn't one of us. I have proof." Astrid brandished the note from her bag and handed it over to Ruffnut though she looked at the paper with utter confusion written on her face.

"What kind of messed-up scribbles are these?"

Once again, Astrid sighed. "The note's written in cursive."

"I knew that," Ruff''s response was quick to the defensive.

"Sure ye did," Astrid deadpanned. "Anyway on the letter was attached to the bashyball when I found it by my fence. It even had this fancy looking seal on it."

Ruffnut snorted in a very unladylike manner. "Who still writes notes in this day and age anyway?"

"Stay focused Ruff' this letter was written to me by someone calling them self the 'Caretaker of Haddock Castle'â€| whatever that means."

"I didn't even know there was a caretaker for that place."

"I don't think there is. Someone is leading me on I just know it."

"Somebody sounds a little paranoid much." Astrid fought the urge to glare at Ruffnut.

"And fer good reason." Astrid said. "This person knows where I live. This guy had the nerve to call me out."

Ruff' gave Astrid a serious look for once and asked, "Sure yer not jus' overreacting?"

"I have every reason to act like this. I can't just sit around and let some arse think I can be teased and be messed with. I need to get the bottom of this and find out who that guy is."

"Ye sure it's some bloke that's did it and not a girl?"



Astrid rolled her eyes. "Quit smirking Ruff' it's not what yer thinkin.' The person sounded way too proud to be a lass. I cannae sit around while some goon thinks they've got the upper hand on me. I need to know what's going on at Castle Haddock."

"Even though the mayor told everyone to stay clear of that place?"

Astrid nodded, firmly. "I already busted in there once. A second time can't hurt. But I won't be there for an empty so don't ask, Ruff  
\*\*(1)\*\*."

Ruff' quickly shut her mouth in retaliation and pouted. "I wuzin' going to ah." She turned her attention back to Astrid. "So how are ye gonna get in the castle? Didn't Mayor SkÃ¶ll say in his speech that a whole lot of coppers are gonna be there to keep trespassers?"

\_I have no effin' idea. \_Astrid mentally cursed.

\* \* \*

><p>"I still don't see what's so bad about a fish castle. Naming a castle after a haddock sounds lame." Snotlout asked in a bored tone while he was piled on top of Fishlegs with Tuffnut helping him. They both kept Camicazi at bay with their hands pressed on her face as she tried pathetically to push forward.<p>

"Uh Snotlout," Fishlegs muttered under the two boys. "I don't think it's called Haddock Castle because of that."

Snotlout frowned at the half-buried boy. "Did I say you could talk?"

"Hey guys!" Heather called out, gaining the others attention. She placed her hands on her hips and asked, "Does anybody know what happened to Astrid and Ruffnut? I don't think they're here anymore."

All eyes turned to the small stone porch where the two blondes were last seen and lo and behold neither Astrid or Ruffnut could be found.

"Uh, guys I can't see what's going on still." Fishlegs mumbled while the others widened their eyes.

\* \* \*

><p>For the rest of the day Astrid and Ruffnut left for the tall grass that separated the school field from Haddock Castle. They weren't technically vacating the school grounds but the girls were leaning on the fine line between the school and castle.<p>

"You know if they didn't want kids like us to go into the castle they shouldn't have built the school so close to it in the first place." Ruffnut pointed out while Astrid narrowed her eyes at the building in question. The boaby were already surrounding the castle while their cars were parked near the front. So going through the front door like before had to be crossed off the list.

"There has to be another way inside." Astrid muttered. "But what?"

"How did the ball get in?" Ruff' asked cryptically.

"The note said the it fell into the castle basementâ€¦ yes, there's a basement here apparently. I was just as surprised as you are."

Ruff' blinked. "So did it go through a hole-"

"No it," Astrid's eyes widened in realization. "It broke through a window. Somewhere around here I think. I mean this side of the wall." She quickly got up and moved around a bit while motioning with her hands. "I, remember that you and I tripped over and the ball and it skidded across the lawn, then went toward the castle."

"Weird how things work like that." Ruff' replied in her usual bored tone.

Astrid shrugged in response. She knelt down again once she saw movement coming from the booby. They were no longer surrounding the castle and instead walked toward the front where a car pulled up.

"Can yah see who it is?"

"No I can't, Ruff'â€¦ but I am not missing **this opportunity.**" Like a bullet Astrid shot up and ran straight for the wall. She made sure to be careful with each step to keep herself from making any loud noises. Once Astrid arrived at the wall she took out a torch from her rucksack. Its silver cylinder form gleamed in her hands and pressed the light on with the push of a button. She crouched to the ground to spot any clues or some indents in the grass that marked where the ball might have rolled. When her thumb touched a shard of broken glass Astrid quickly retracted the digit. She looked carefully to the ground and noticed more shards all across the grass nearing one section to the wall. Seeing this a good sign Astrid pushed the tall reeds away and found the broken window. Much to her luck the opening was more than large enough for her slide in.

\_Putting on the denim trousers before coming here was a very good idea. I'll thank Ruff' for that later.\_ Astrid angled her body along with shifting her weight in order to slip inside. She landed feet first on several crates that were-conveniently for her-placed right underneath the broken window. Dust formed around Astrid making her cough in the process while she turned her torch on to see into the darkness. All around Astrid were old objects dating back to ages even older than most of the people in the village collected dust of their own. Sheets half-covered furniture was stacked on top of one another while other novelties Astrid was unable to think off the top of her head could be seen.

\_Half of this stuff looks like it belongs to a museum.\_ Astrid thought while looking at a tattered flag that caught her eye when she spotted a familiar dragon insignia nestled at its center. Her eyes narrowed for a moment until she heard a noise. A crate filled with thick rugs half-devoured by moths landed on the ground with a very obvious thud. The torch shined brightly toward the fallen fabric as Astrid's eyes seemingly shined far stronger out of fright.

\_What's wrong with me? Getting scared over some rugs is ridiculous. At least the other day I had the excuse of someone nearly falling on-\_\_

"Uhâ€| hello." Astrid's train of thought vanished completely when she heard a nasally voice whispered. She looked straight toward the rugs again to see a figure slightly behind other crates that had fortunately remained standing. Astrid tightened her gaze as her eyes turned into slits.

"Come out into the light." \_Wow, when did I get to sound so demanding?\_

Whether the person was obeying Astrid or not she soon came face-to-face with someone she did not recognize in the slightest. Astrid knew just about everyone in Berkenshire, thanks to it being a small town, but this person, this boy, she never met up until now.

Standing before Astrid was the least frightening person she was expecting to come across. He didn't even appear to be any older than she was. His built was small, fairly thin with lanky arms and legs. But his beanpole shape and size was not what fazed Astrid (she had seen plenty people at her school who \*\*wished \*\*they were skinny as beanpole-boy, thank you very much) but was his article of clothing.

He looked like someone who didn't have a empathy of the current fashions with pants that appeared to be sown with an odd looking brown textile with old leather shoes that Astrid's grandfather wouldn't have worn for being so old. His shirt was more like a tunic than anything else since Astrid didn't see any brand names or some iconic symbol. It was a plain white tunic with a dark green vest covering it. A dark green vest with gold buttons, those made Astrid's eyebrows rise only until the next sight she took. The skinny arms wrapped nervously around the bony waist showing two hands with skin while peachy didn't appear to tanned enough like most of the other kids Astrid had seen. Her eyes trailed up until they met with a pair of the deep forest green Astrid had seen the other night. The eyes were framed by a bushy mop of reddish-brown hair that freely rested on his head a dozen or so freckles sprinkled across his face. The forest green-eyed beanpole glanced down at the ground as if from some kind of embarrassment while biting his lower lip.

\_This was not what I was expecting.\_ Astrid thought as the complete awkwardness of the situation fell upon her.

A few minutes passed until the boy looked toward Astrid again with an earnest gaze. "Well for the first time I would be meeting someone, at all, I must admit this was not the kind of meeting I had been expect-"

WHACK!

"Why would you do that?!" The boy exclaimed in pain. Astrid tapped her torch back and forth in her hand, her bravado quickly returning after she had hit the little twerp.

"That was fer tryin' to sneak up on me!" What a great wonderful first impression for the both of them to have on the other; Astrid thinking

the boy as a weak-minded coward for possibly being the guy the wronged her and the boy now starting to regret ever helping her out in the first place.

Indeed the start of a beautiful relationship.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Well you all had asked for it. They meet each other. XD But honestly who did not see that one coming? Hiccup kind of had in coming since the whole letter shenanigan from the start. I hope everyone liked the portrayal of the characters. I didn't think they got to flesh out as much in the last one they were all in, you know?

**\*\*Erik â€" forever strong. \*\***I figured Astrid's father would be someone tough since he'd shape a lot of her personality from his own.

**\*\*Brenda â€" Norse for sword or brand. \*\***Apparently the name originated in the Shetland Isles, I couldn't pass that name up just for that alone. I did notice how similar it is to Bertha but I figured since Camicazi and Astrid are similar to a degree I figured so would their mums. ^-^ That's the kind of strong friendship Berkenshire has, the kind that can transcend lifetimes. XDDD Boy I am such a sap.

**\*\*(1) An empty \*\***- the residents who live in the house are not present and people take advantage by having a party in the "empty" house.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 6. Blue and Yellow

**\*\*Q-A: \*\***Here we go with chapter 6. Whoot-whooot! :D For those of you who have been waiting and WAITING for Hiccup and Astrid to properly meet well here you go! It should be full of the thing you'll be expecting for sure, and as for the other stuffâ€¦ quit thinking that way you pervs. XD Just kidding. By the way, the song for this chapter is The Used's \_Blue and Yellow. \_

**\*\*Respond to Guest Reviews: \*\***

\_DarkKingM: \_I'm happy you like the story so far. XD We'll be seeing plenty of smacking/hitting in later chapters. Can't have Astrid any other way really. XDDD

**\*\*Disclaimer: \*\***None of the characters (film/TV. series -verse and book-verse) are mine yada, yada, and something about me making the planned trilogy longer is somewhere put in there along with the mentioning's of a Toothless shrine or something or other.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Blue and Yellow<strong>

By this point in time, Hiccup was **\*\*really\*\*** starting to reconsider helping out Loud-Screaming girl the other day. Not only did she come

back but also apparently produced some kind of blunt weapon which she used to land a blow on his crown. Hiccup's poor head swelled up in a matter of seconds. He quickly berated himself for leaving the sanctuary that was the courtyard and instead to venture into the castle underground where the aggressive maiden had only just stumbled in moments ago.

\_What in God and the Norse Gods' names did she meant by sneaking up on her? \_Hiccup thought while rubbing his head. \_I would dare not harass a ladyâ€| more than once. Even if she does strike me down. \_A great revelation soon appeared in Hiccup's thoughts.\_ O' my dear father must be so proud of me, being in my first fight, and I lose to a woman. Though I assume, Mother wouldn't be too upset by it. \_His mother, Valhallarama, was a gracious woman like that.

Realizing the silence that had befallen upon the two Hiccup knew something needed to be done. \_I can't keep a lady standing there without some sort of explanation. \_

The silence was broken when Loud-Screaming girl spoke while pointing her blunt weapon at him. "Start talking," she spoke with a commanding tone Hiccup could only wish to have. "Why are you here?"

\_Smart wit, she has I will give her that.\_ "Should I be the one to ask you that instead?" Hiccup asked without a second thought. After just comprehending the erroneous words slipping out of his mouth Hiccup panicked at what to say next and decided to continue with his train of thought, despite the looming fear that Loud-Screaming girl would hit him a second time. "I wasn't the one who broke into the castle twice in two days."

WHACK!

"Ow! Again with the striking! What on this earth has possessed you to do that?"

"That was the worst question I ever heard." Loud-Screaming girl retorted in a weak attempt of an excuse.

"But a very valid one all the same." Hiccup added with a slight smile. This girl was starting to amuse him. Her reasons for hurting him made as much sense as his rambling.

Loud-Screaming girl's scowl grew slightly when she groaned a moment later. "I'm wasting mah time, I'm not here for a beanpole."

Hiccup mouthed the word 'beanpole' in confusion while the girl ignored him and then said, "I don't have to explain anything to you. Now if you excuse me, I have someone I need to have a word with."

Loud-Screaming girl began to walk away from Hiccup until he realized what she just said. "And who would that person be exactly?"

"I don't have to answer to you." She started walking away. Hiccup wasn't sure whether to follow her or not. \_So ends my tea plans with her and Toothless. \_He of course was not being remotely serious, but Hiccup always did like putting as much dry humor into any situation as possible.

The blonde haired girl stopped and turned around, her frown deepened. "Wait, you said earlier that I came here twice, how did you know that?"

\_Well I am in trouble. \_Hiccup sighed. "Well if you must knowâ€¦ I have been living here for sometime-not forever-just, um," he trailed off. This was a lot harder than he had anticipated. He was breaking every rule his parents had laid out for him; never go outside of the castle, talk to no one other than Mother and Father, and \*\*never\*\* let anyone inside the castle, so far Hiccup managed to botch everything on that list.

Quietly Hiccup sighed again, this time pinching the bridge of his nose. "Listen, Miss I would \*\*love \*\*to continue this conversation with you, believe me I like getting abused, but I'm tired, I had a long day and-you're still glowering at me like a lion ready for the kill."

"Good observation." The girl barked with crystal-blue eyes in a rage, yellow eyebrows furrowing. "Don't be around the bush, were. You. Following.\*\* Me?\*"

Loud-Screaming girl pointed her blunt weapon at Hiccup again. It would seem the girl had got the idea of using the metal cylinder against him.

As he looked to the ground, intimidated by Loud-Screaming girl, Hiccup muttered, "Maybe. Most likely. Definitely, but do understand I was looking out for you and nothing else." He braced himself for another attack by the dreaded blunt weapon, but seconds passed when Hiccup opened his eyes and saw that the girl was staring at him. Green eyes blinked in confusion before Hiccup asked nervously, "Are you going to hit me again with that metal stick of yours?"

Loud-Screaming girl blinked as well and sputtered in the most unusual manner Hiccup did not expect from her. She ignored Hiccup's previous question and instead an entirely different one. "Are yoo trying to tell me that yoo-yer the Caretaker? Yer the one that sent me that note and returned the bashyball to my house?"

Without missing a beat Hiccup nodded slowly, "Yes, that was I." He smiled anxiously.

Perhaps Loud-Screaming girl was going stop hitting him and instead offer a hand of friendship. Oh, yes that would be so wonderful for Hiccup to have a kindred spirit outside of the reptile variety. He could already picture all the enjoyable things that would occur once they became friendsâ€¦ he wasn't able to think up anything. Hiccup never had a human friend before how in the Lord and Odin's names was he going to figure something like that out? Could any of the books in the giant library be some use to him? Were there any books that discussed the issues revolving around friendship? Or maybe he could ask Tooth-

\_No, \_Hiccup mentally shook his head. \_Bad idea. Definitely a bad idea. \_

Hiccup was taken out of his thoughts when the girl spoke up again. "He-yoo-yer bothâ€¦" She groaned in exasperation while slapping her

forehead with her free hand. She then uttered several words that were very uncouth for a woman to speak aloud. Her blue eyes hardened for one moment, making Hiccup fear for his life again until those hard eyes inexplicably softened and held a sort of roundness to them. She was no longer scowling either with her features suddenly becoming unreadable, and she looked to the ground. Hiccup was unsure about these shifting events as the girl looked less angry and more pensive. A part of him wondered if she some plan thought out only for it have been ruined by his answer.

\_I'm quite worried right now. \_Hiccup thought with great unease. \_I do hope this won't end like those Edgar Allen Poe stories I had so mistakenly read. Oh, if this woman stabs me in the heart and stashes it away beneath the floorboard-\_

"And here I thought yoo'd be a head taller and older than mah dad." Loud-Screaming girl sighed as she rubbed her head. She looked over at Hiccup with a tired expression that readily showed her looking very annoyed. "This would've been so much easier if yoo were some plastered geezer living here as some crazed hermit."

\_She is not too far off from the old hermit guise. Shame the curse hasn't allowed me to look that part though. Not sure what 'plastered' means though. I might ask Toothless that one later. \_

"Well I can assure you, Miss, I am the Castle Caretaker. I apologize if my build doesn't fit your criteria of a 'proper caretaker' but this is all you will get, I promise you."

\_Or at least the part I am willing t reveal that is.\_

Loud-Screaming girl looked at Hiccup with a confounded look. "Why are yoo even talking like that? We're not in 'Jolly Ol' Britain.'" Her eyes narrowed again but this time more out of annoyance than genuine anger. "And what's with this Miss stuff? I have a name yoo know."

"Honestly I don't know." Hiccup replied in a snarky tone. \_Gods' and God, I never behaved like this before. This woman is being a rather horrible influence on me. \_He wasn't sure whether he preferred it that way or not since he was no on the fence over the whole idealistic friendship anymore. "If I recall you have not given me a name."

"Well it's better that yoo don't." She replied coldly with her arms crossed and turning away.

\_And she finds \*\*my\*\* accent odd? \_"Look I can obviously see that you came here for some sort of brawl coming from your choice of clothing and that blunt weapon of yours."

"What weapon?" Hiccup motioned his head toward the silver cylinder rod in the blonde's hand. She glanced at it for a second before giving him another look. "This is mah torch. I brought it with me in case it got dark again, and I would need a light."

It was Hiccup's turn to give the girl a look. "Miss, I have seen my fair share of torches, and that looks nothing like the ones I have seen before. It's made out of metal; you can't light a flame over it."

With an arched eyebrow and dropped jaw the girl retorted, "This is doesn't need a fire, stupid. The light-bulb turns on and-wait why am I even explaining this to yoo?"

"I honestly do not know," seemed to be the best response for Hiccup during this situation.

She groaned again this time lowering her 'torch' (yeah, Hiccup didn't believe that, not by a long shot) in the process. Hiccup wondered if she were beginning to see how incredulous this whole experience was turning out. For something that started out violent it turned into something rather awkward.

"So," the girl began with uncertainty. "What yer trying to say is that yer the caretaker and the same guy that brought back the ball too?"

Hiccup nodded wordlessly.

Another groan emitted from her. "I'm such a git. I came all this way for a confrontation with some old man when instead I'm confronted withâ€¦" She looked over at Hiccup with what appeared to be a evaluating gaze before concluding, "This."

While slightly put off, Hiccup gestured to himself and said, "But you just pointed to **\*\*all\*\*** me."

"Yeah," the girl replied in an equally objected manner. "All of you, that's not in any way intimidating."

Did she really just say that?

Hiccup narrowed his eyes before he mockingly warned Loud-Screaming girl. "Miss, you are in the domain of a dangerous brute." He began to sound more exasperated with each word. "Insinuating that I cannot be fierce will lead to serious trouble."

The girl looked at him with confusion before she resumed her annoyed expression. "Yer a weird one, yoo know that?"

Hiccup was really getting tired of being reminded of that. "Yes, I know." He replied, teeth scrapping in his jaw.

"I was talking about yer accent and attitude." The girl excused herself.

Hiccup rolled his eyes, not believing a word of it. "Forgive me if I can't withhold my manner of speaking." He wanted to add that her accent sounded ridiculous to him but held against it since he was still trying to play a good host.

"Seriously stop." She placed a hand over her head. "This is just so much to sink in right now fer me."

"Tell me about it." Hiccup sighed. He walked over to where a crate laid and plopped on it unceremoniously. The girl gave him a strange look.

"The constables are still surrounding the perimeter of the castle,"



Hiccup explained. "Might as well get comfortable and wait until they leave."

"Yoo've got to me kidding me."

Hiccup arched an eyebrow in confusion. "Not sure what goats have to do with this so--"

The girl raised a hand, silencing Hiccup. "We're obviously at a crossroads."

"I couldn't agree more." The cursed boy had suffered enough from the wicked hand of the bloodthirsty maiden. He did not want there to be an impasse to go along with the growing list of irritants between both adolescents.

"Let's justâ€¦ we should start over." Loud-Screaming girl said finally. Her scowl was less apparent, though her eyes still held apprehension toward the boy. Hiccup wanted to wallow in despair; the girl appeared to be unyielding to trust him.

"Shall we start with names?" Hiccup offered in a hopeful tone. \_She has to confide\_ \_\*\*some \*\*\_\_trust in me\_

The girl made a snort to assert her displeasure in that suggestion. "Like I would give yoo mah name."

Scratch that, she doesn't trust Hiccup in the slightest way possible.

"Then what are we to do? Simply give each other false faÃ§ades until some trust is built?" Hiccup would regret voicing his thoughts later.

Loud-Screaming girl suddenly held a brightened look that quirked Hiccup's mild interest until she declared, "That's what I'll do fer now. And so will yoo." She pointed toward Hiccup.

"I will?"

"Glad yoo already agree with me."

"I did no such thing." Hiccup to the proud looking girl. He stood up from his box and narrowed his eyes at her. "I would rather like it better for you to leave than do such a ridiculous idea." \_Dear God and Odin, what am I saying? \_

"Well, the only way fer me to leave would is to go through the front door," Loud-Screaming girl pointed to a random spot of the ceiling where the door might've been located at. "But~ obviously there are some policemen outside, and something tells me that yoo would rather like that no one knows that a hermit is living here."

\_She compares me to a-a waif? Oh-wait she mentioned the police!\_ "Now just you listen here--"

"I could scream yoo know." She replied quickly with a smirk when Hiccup gaped at her. "And then they'll come chargin' in with guns blazing all over--"

"Fine, fine," Hiccup raised his hands in defeat. He sighed. "Fine, we can go with the false names. I wouldn't have assumed someone like you cared about that sort of thing."

"I'm tired of yoo callin' me Miss all the time." Loud-Screaming girl replied. "'S getting on mah nerves and such."

\_If that were the only excuse. \_Hiccup wasn't sure if he were bewildered or amused by this strange girl's ways. She was so different from his mother and yet held herself in a way that was frighteningly similar to the proud and fierce Valhallarama.

"What would you prefer me to call you?" Hiccup asked after a short moment of silence.

The girl shrugged, her braided hair flipping off one shoulder before falling into the middle of her back. "Anything that's not an insult."

Hiccup held back a smile; the girl was indeed amusing when she wasn't acting tense. To Hiccup, she might actually be someone with a good sense of humor. All he needed was to earn her trust and become her friend. Yes, Hiccup was so desperate for companionship outside of his dragon kin that he was willing to befriend the same person that struck him earlier. The first thing he should do to get in the girl's good graces was to call her by a name that was the least insulting. He didn't desire to give her a name that was too flattering on the fear she might take it the wrong way. Whichever way it would be wasn't something Hiccup wished to know. He still wanted the name to be meaningful though, something that was memorable for him while also being slightly endearing.

\_Fearless, for her bravery in coming her? \_Hiccup initially thought. \_No, that would just be a reproduction of Toothless and \_\_\*\*he \*\*\_\_wouldn't be pleased about that. \_

"I'm still here yoo know." Loud-Screaming girl snapped.

Without thinking, Hiccup started to say his mother's name. "Val-" he bit his tongue and then covered his mouth out of embarrassment.

The girl stared at him curiously. "Val?"

"No wait!" Hiccup waved his hands. "Valâ€| Valkyrie. That's it that'll be your name."

She arched an eyebrow at him, her devoid of the slightest expression as though contemplating over the name. After what felt like an eternity to Hiccup the girl finally said, "Fine, it's a bit odd but beggars can't be choosers."

Hiccup titled his head in slight amusement of that foreign phrase. Just about everything Loud-no, Valkyrie has said that afternoon while aggressive and fierce still acted with the familiar derring-can-do attitude from yesterday. He also found the little phrase she had just uttered to be a fine rendition to his old favorite 'never look a gift horse in the mouth.' Somehow Hiccup was starting to warm up to Valkyrie; she was starting to sound like someone he could truly be friends with.

Valkyrie peered over toward Hiccup with her blue eyes staring down at him with such intensity that it made him feel his mouth dry up. "And I'll call youâ€¦ Hermit."

And now that trust was squandered in a heartbeat. Hiccup wasn't sure which he was more annoyed with; the fact that he gave the blonde girl a very nice and fitting name, while he got thoughtlessly saddled with Hermit, or that Hermit was frighteningly similar sounding to his actual name.

Hiccup held a look of utter disbelief at the girl before he started, "Not sure whether to be offended or insulted. I think I will go with offended."

"Would you prefer 'Stalker' instead?" Valkyrie suggested while gesturing her free hand.

"Hermit it is then." Hiccup said with forced enthusiasm.

Another awkward silence fell upon the two as the constables outside remained completely unaware of the occupants inside the not-so haunted castle. Hiccup was unsure what to do next with his knowledge of socializing lacking at best. He wanted to say something to Valkyrie, but he wasn't all that set on what to speak about. His contact to the outside was a fire breathing pain-in-the-neck that would rather eat an eel than befriend a human... And yet, Toothless was friends with Hiccup despite him being human during daylight hours.

\_He just never shows up when the sun is though.\_ Hiccup thought with some bitterness. \_Of course, his excuse is that he doesn't want to be spotted by dragon hunters, even if they haven't been around since two hundred years ago.\_

"So, now what?" Valkyrie asked; dullness etched in her voice.

"Until the constables leave, I suppose just, you and me will stay here and wait."

That didn't seem to sit well with Valkyrie as she gave Hiccup a side look and replied, "Nope, just you." Seconds later she started to head straight for the door that Hiccup had neglected to close shut.

"Where do you think you're going?" Hiccup asked with crossed arms. He made a beeline toward the door and intercepted the blonde before she could reach the handle.

"Leaving, that's where."

"You **\*\*do \*\***remember that there are constables outside waiting for to look for trespassers."

"Like us?" That she-devil smirked with an accusing brow. The nerve! Her assuming the worst, and that he was a hooligan like sheâ€¦ well the tribe had once nicknamed themselves the Hairy Hooligans at one point but that was beside the point!

Hiccup grumbled in annoyance and glowered to the ground. His new friend was quite precocious, or perhaps pretentious was the proper

word. Either way Hiccup was very confused by Valkyrie's behavior. First she wanted to strike him down with everything she got but now she was willing to forgive and (read never) forget the whole situation? But instead she wished to leave.

"I am not very sure how I can be a help in that with leaving the castle without the constables noticing."

"So we're stuck here." Valkyrie puffed out a sigh. She found a crate for herself to sit upon while propping her hands underneath her chin, the metal weapon lying casually to her side. More of the dreaded awkward silence fell again. Hiccup soon followed her example and unknowingly sat on

A small thought stuck Hiccup's mind when he **\*\*did\*\*** remember a way outâ€| the only problem was that he did not know whether showing it to Valkyrie was a good idea or not. If she knew about the other way out there was a high chance, she might exploit it. Hiccup still felt guilty about the treachery to his parents' wishes. He already broke far too many rules; he couldn't add more to the list.

\_But I honestly do not know if she would even come back if I show her the **\*\*other\*\*** way out. She may or she won't that's all I can trust her with right now. That's all it is really, lending enough trust to her. \_Hiccup's thoughts soon trailed off to when he first met Toothless again. The full Night Fury promised the dragon boy that he would return after the first night. Hiccup remembered how worried he was as he waited for night to fall and grew more anxious as the first stars flickered into the sky and there was no sign of the dragon. The cursed boy was ready to accept his sadness when Toothless flew into the tower's roof right on cue, earning an ecstatic hug from the bipedal Night Fury. Hiccup could've seen it coming really, that giant reptile could be heard a kilometer away with his loud calls-

\_Wait, that's it! \_Hiccup thought jubilantly. He jumped off of his seat and quickly (but cautiously) stood to where Valkyrie sat. Another fiendishly clever plan of his rattled through his brain while Hiccup beamed enthusiastically at the girl. Valkyrie, on the other hand, looked at him with hopeless confusion that mingled with a hint of uncertainty.

"I know how to get you out of here!"

"How," asked Valkyrie. "The boobies are crawling along the sides of the castle walls." She was in obvious disagreement with Hiccup. "There's no way I can-"

"There is," Hiccup promised while interrupting her at the same time. Out of politeness Hiccup bent down to the floor and picked up the blunt weapon. For that brief moment, he held it in his hands Hiccup did somewhat see the properties that made the metal cylinder appear to work like a torch-he of course would never admit this outside of his thoughts, never ever. Without skipping a beat Hiccup handed it over to Valkyrie, not once anticipating for her to hit him again.

Surprisingly she did not.

"Okay," Valkyrie spoke with her voice still unwavering a bit. "So

what's the plan? If there is one, that is."

All Hiccup did was smile.

\* \* \*

><p>By far this had got to be unrelievedly boring, most of the constables thought while they listened to their mayor discussing plans on searching the castle. While most of them were uneasy about going inside the very thing their own parents had once warned them to never go inside, the constables were starting to get a little jaded and impatient. They were growing bored with their fearless leader going on and on about what they were planning to do once inside the castle when they weren't even in it yet. How the bloody hell Mayor SkÃ¶ll ever got anything done with all his talking, and scheming was beyond any of their understanding.<p>

"So once we get around through the west end, the fourth group will be making the trek by the east and travel up through nearâ€¦" The mayor's voice trailed off when an unusual sound cry echoed.

"What in the devil?" SkÃ¶ll exclaimed right before another roar was heard near the cliffs.

"It came down there!" The Chief Constable pointed at the edge before charging away blindly. The rest of the force followed suit to the cliffs that were several yards away. SkÃ¶ll sighed exasperatedly before following suit. Not one of those adults noticed or heard the grand doors near the front of the castle opening by a slight gap with two heads poking out.

\_I am finding it hard to believe that actually worked.\_ Hiccup thought, proud of himself.

"That was the strangest bird call I ever heard." Valkyrie spoke in a tone that sounded like she honestly did not believe it was a birdcall. Hiccup became self-aware of how close he and she were and instinctively pushed the door wider to let out more space.

"Yes well, I have had a lot of practice." Hiccup replied sheepishly. The call he really made was based on a Gronckle friend of Toothless' that the boy vaguely remembered was called Meatlug.

An odd name for a female Gronckle but Toothless told him that Meatlug's parents wanted a male.

"Sound like something out of \_Jurassic Park \_though."

"What?"

"Nevermind," Valkyrie quickly said before she made her leave. That insufferable pain from before came to Hiccup again when he watched her walking away. Much to his surprise (and joy) she paused momentarily and turned around.

\_Wait she can't just stand there. The constables might see her! \_Hiccup panicked with him mentally pulling his hair out.

"Hermit," It was the second time Valkyrie called out to him through

that false name; still Hiccup could not help but feel some sort of contentment for finally being called out by someone, someone that was human at least.

"Y-yes." He mentally scolded himself for stuttering. He thought he fixed that problem during the mid-nineteenth century.

The blonde girl looked toward the ground briefly before drawing her attention back toward Hiccup. "You honestly don't live in the village at all, do you?"

Hiccup felt a little offended that Valkyrie still lacked the will to trust him. Though she did have every right to since he still told practically nothing about his true self, and she now knew, he was the one that went to her house. That part he wished she did not know about. He was happy that she had not asked about the incident when he fell from the ceiling. A part of him wanted to believe that she held enough trust to not bring that subject, but his far more reasonable-and cynical-part offered that she might have forgotten the whole moment entirely.

Hiccup knew that keeping the lady waiting was not the best move for him at this point in time and reluctantly nodded in response to her question.

A small hint of sympathy appeared on Valkyrie's face before she asked, "How long have you been living here?"

"For." Hiccup started to answer before trailing off. "What should I say? Tell her I have been in this castle since 1796?" "For some time." He decided on. Half of what he said was truthful, even though he still felt like he was lying to her.

"I'll come back." Valkyrie said much to Hiccup's astonishment.

"What?" Hiccup knew this all had to be a dream.

"I said 'I'll come back,'" she said again. "Don't ask why." Valkyrie spoke something on the side that was too low for Hiccup to hear before she added, "Just don't take this whole thing the wrong way."

Hiccup shook his head. "I am not."

Valkyrie nodded once. "Good. I don't know when I'll be comin', but yoo will be seeing me again. There's a whole lot that I need tah talk tah yoo about, and I hate not having questions answered."

Hiccup was starting to feel a little worried. "Is that really such a good idea?"

Valkyrie interrupted him. "Of course. Yoo're a complete hermit here and need somebody to talk with. Plus, I hit yoo on the head earlier."

"Twice," Hiccup reminded her while rubbing the bruise on his head. He winced slightly from the pain and Valkyrie, oddly enough, followed suit.

"Until yer head gets better I'll be seeing yoo." Valkyrie promised with the upmost sincerity.

"You will," Hiccup could no longer hide the happiness he was feeling in this moment. "I would hate for you to waste your time here," his memory of her complaining about pointlessly sneaking into the castle was fresh in his mind.

Valkyrie ignored the last part whether on purpose or not as she said, "Yeah, at least until yer head is fine." She clearly wanted to make this whole thing strictly made as an obligation, but Hiccup still reveling in the fact he now had a human willing to speak with him and come see him not once, twice, but **\*\*three \*\*times**. At least it will be three when she comes again whenever that will be. "And Hermit."

While trying not to look irritated Hiccup said, "Yes?"

Valkyrie looked at Hiccup for a moment before she shook her head. "Most of mah time here wasn't entirely wasted just to let yoo know, at least by the end it got a lot better." Her blue eyes shimmered with some sort of mirth Hiccup could not put his finger on and then she flicked her bright yellow braid. Without another word, Valkyrie eventually walked away before she picked up her pace and ran down the rocky path, conveniently avoiding being spotted by the constables.

Hiccup watched Valkyrie's fleeting form long after she was no longer visible from his sight. He closed the door completely when he heard the faint sound of the disgruntled men returning from the cliffside. Judging by the dirty uniforms and sweat Hiccup correctly guessed that the constables came up with the clever idea of climbing down the cliffs to see where the noise came from. The best part came from that instead of going toward the castle which Hiccup initially thought they all went back to their automobiles instead, despite the protests from the tall, burly man Hiccup remembered hearing from the other night.

\_I guess can say that my time was not wasted today either. \_Hiccup thought with an amusing smirk as he quietly shut the grand doors.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>I AM SUPER, SUPER, SUPER, SORRY! I can't believe how long it took to get all of this written out. College and pure laziness can do that to a person. But I thank all of those how still favored and followed my story despite the long wait. I can also blame \_Dragons: Defenders of Berk. \_That new season is awesome. If you haven't seen it yet (and watched the first one) GO watch it!

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 7. At the End of August

**\*\*Q-A: \*\***Who else feels sadden by the two-week break of \_Dragons: Defenders of Berk\_? D; I'm telling ya; Cartoon Network is making a big mistake with that choice. But hey, at least I am still updating am I right? XD It's not the same but at least it's something. Thank

you all very much for the 40 reviews! And let's not forget the followers and favorites; they're all very nice too. The song that inspired this chapter is At the End of August by 36 Crazyfists.

**\*\*Disclaimer:** \*\*None of this is mine. The story idea IS mine but the characters belong to Cressdia Cowell and Dreamworks respectively.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>At the End of August <strong>

August 25th 2010 (Berkenshire Secondary School, 7th Period English)~

"So are yoo jus' gonna be quiet like yoo were this mornin' or actually tell me something." Ruffnut half-whispered to Astrid. The Thorston girl, along with the rest of the gang, had apparently held some concern for the Hofferson girl since that morning.

The shorter blonde held back an irritated grunt. Astrid was not in the mood to talk. She rarely was until recently. Her visit to Haddock Castle left Astrid with a lot to mull over. Out of all the inklings Astrid had pictured in her head, she never once thought of, well someone actually residing inside the castle. Everyone in town knew to stay clear of the place and yet that boy seemingly paid no heed to the law. He acted like he was. â€|comfortable with living in those kind of conditions. No sane person in his or her right mind could be comfortable living like the way Hermit did, and yet he was completely casual about it all. Well, at least from what she noticed from yesterday.

\_He's definitely hiding something.\_ Astrid thought. \_Something that I am going to find out. \_It was the first plan she had come up since the other night. Her mind had been in a daze from the experience she had at Haddock Castle. It was only until she finally returned home that her thoughts weaved into place again, and she could properly formulate a plan. Her plan so far was to learn more about Hermit and find out the truth of who he really was. The first thing she would need to do was earn his trust in order to get the boy to lower his guard on her.

\_That shouldn't be too hard from the way he behaved yesterday. He acted nervous around me, like he was afraid he would say something insulting. Hermit's a cheeky devil, but not some silly assâ€| well maybe a little bit perhaps. \_Astrid felt her lip nearly curl into what appeared to be a smile. \_Me? Smiling over some boy? \_

And with a boy she only met the other day?\_ Oh no, not meâ€|

—

"-strid, ASTRID!"

"Wh-wha," Astrid started with a dazed expression. Around her, the sound of snickering was heard. Her ears turned a slight pink.

"Thank ye, Ruffnut fer giving yer classmate a wake-up call." Gobber expressed gratitude to the female Thorston. He gave Astrid a raised eyebrow out of interest but continued not speaking directly at her. It was uncommon to see the usually determined girl zone out of class



studies; this was new even to Astrid. "Now as I was sayin,' at the end of August yoo lot will be startin' on a reading project."

Collective groans replaced the snickering.

"Wait a minute, read?" Tuffnut exclaimed in outermost horror.

"While we're still alive?" Ruffnut followed suit with her head dropping in despair.

"What's the point of reading when the stuff the books tell you the stuff to do?" Snotlout lamented in a manly way.

Astrid heard Fishlegs being the only one showing some form of joy over the project while she decided to keep her feelings to herself as always. She honestly had no ill strife with a book report, a lot less than the whole damned journal assignment at least. All that was needed to do was for her to find a book, write out the 'special meaning' it was conveying, which could be found and easily altered from \_SparkNotes\_. Then later conclude what chapter spoke the most to her (read heavy sarcasm).

"This year the book report is goin' tah be a wee bit different from the ones yoo all might be used to." Gobber resumed after he silenced them all with his hammered arm again. "The book yoo need to read will be of yer choosin,' but it must be over 250 words and the pages worth being two and a half. It's all in the assignment sheet I'll be given ya before the end of class."

The groaning resumed again.

\* \* \*

><p>The rest of the class period carried on until the bell eventually rang. Bashyball practice returned with a triumphant uproar from the group when Gobber announced the bashyball was returned to his office the other night. Astrid was given a few richly deserved thank-yous for that accomplishment. Sadly the crushing and bruising had to come to an end when practice was over. The sweaty teammates dispersed to the showers right after practice.<p>

"I was jus' havin' fun when Gobber blew the whistle." Camicazi said unhappily, wringing her hair dry with a towel.

"Yeah, why did it have to end so soon?" Ruffnut agreed though hers sounded muffled, due

"Not soon enough," Astrid heard Heather muttered under her breath. The blonde rolled her eyes but remained silent. She didn't care what Heather and Fishlegs' views on Bashyball were. As long as she was allowed to continue playing it, Astrid was perfectly fine. So what if they didn't like getting bruised? A game can only be fun if a scar is gained from it.

"The worst part is with practice over, we now 'ave to start on our reading projects." Ruffnut griped before adding a word that would make Gobber blush. She stood by the mirrors along with Astrid and Heather fixing up their hair.

Camicazi chortled. "Sucks to be you lot."

Astrid smirked knowingly. "Don't act so high and mighty, Cami, yoo'll have tah do the project in a year's time like us."

The smaller blonde immediately ceased her giggling.

Ruffnut sniggered, "Good one, Astrid."

"It's the truth."

"A harsh truth." Cami' sighed.

Heather gave her underclassman a reassuring shoulder squeeze. "Don't listen to them. The project isn't all that bad."

Camicazi shook her head and raised her chin. "Who said I was scared?"

"No one I-"

"Nobody in Berkenshire is afraid of anythin.'" The young Bog girl struck a pose before reciting the town's oldest and most famous motto. "'Only the Strong can Belong.'"

"Here, here!" Ruff whistled on agreement.

Heather sighed. "I keep fergetting how things are different here then they were back in my old town."

"Getting homesick?" Ruffnut asked teasingly.

Heather furrowed her eyebrows for a moment before replying in a still voice. "Yoo know, I don' think I remember much about mah old village before moving here." The discussssion differed between the black haired girl and the two talkative blondes; Astrid continued untangling her hair. Her eyes stared into the mirror as she brushed her hair into a more manageable mess. She was so focused on her work that Astrid almost didn't notice the burning glass lantern behind her hanging on the wall. Astrid blinked in confusion for a brief moment and just as quickly as the lantern appearedâ€¦ it vanished.

"Astrid," Ruffnut chimed, her timing impeccable. "That has got to be the twelfth time I call yoo out today and zoned out. What. Is. Going. On?"

Astrid inwardly scowled, angered that her odd moment ended when it did. "\*\*\*Nothin\*\*.'" E'everything is fine. I jus' have a lot on my mind is all." Some part of that held truth, though the other half wasn't so sure.

"Well I was tryin' to ask ya if yoo were still gonna come with me to the school library toh get the books."

"I already picked mine out," Astrid fibbed. She knew perfectly well what Ruffnut was interested in. The Thorston girl never willingly went to the library unless Gobber, or some other unlucky soul, had the 'pleasure' of dragging her in themselves. Ruffnut wanted to talk about the second trip into Haddock Castle. While Astrid never openly

promised to tell Ruff' what she exactly saw inside, she no longer wanted to after crossing paths with Hermit. It would've been so embarrassing to admit she made a mistake and thought some beanpole was more than a nuisance.

\_A nuisance who's head I bruised overzealously. \_That horrible feeling of guilt swelled inside Astrid again. She was starting to dislike that feeling the many times it came out today.

"Hate to break it to ya, Ruffnut but I heard from Gobber that we can't go into the school library."

Ruffnut stared at Heather incredulously. "Why not?" Astrid did hear a premature sigh of relief from her friend though.

"Something about some renovations to fix up a pipe or something." Heather answered with a shrug from her shoulders, hinting she didn't know any more details.

"This doesn't prevent us from doing the project though," Heather adding, earning a strangled yell from the Thorston girl. "Gobber said we might have to try the town library for books instead. The boys will come with us after we get out of here since I told them already."

"Great to put us in the loop, Heather." Ruffnut did not sound the least bit pleased. Astrid nearly sighed in relief. So it would seem she and Ruff' weren't going to be alone at the library after all.

"Let's just get it over with," Astrid spoke up, straightened her hair to its proper form and walked to the door. Her classmates followed suit.

"Oi, wait up! Wait fer me!" Cami' shouted her clothes not all worn, unlike the others. She scrambled her things together in less than five seconds and went bounding out of the shower room.

\* \* \*

><p>Since practice, this time wasn't extended with a long lap exercise the gang walked through town with plenty of sunlight still streaming above the sky. The town's established marketplace was in its very center with the library not too far off. Thanks to the invention of the Internet and wireless interlinking, the library had seen better days. The building needed a new paint; dust covered various corners of the walls, and a few spider-webs could be seen.<p>

"This place is awful for my asthma," Fishlegs complained. He coughed after breathing in some dust particles.

"Stay quiet, boy." A whisper broke through. The gang quickly turned around to see Harry Hartslicerson. He was usually seen as their school librarian, being very obsessed with keeping all his books in place. There were rumors that he had dogs to sniff after an overdue book and chase the poor soul that forgot to bring it back.

"I-I didn't know you worked here, Mr. Hartslicerson." Fishlegs stuttered.

The long bearded man clicked his tongue, looking more offended by the second. "Nay, I don't work 'ere. She does though." He jerked his body to his right to reveal a new shapely sight. A woman in her early twenties stood behind the school librarian in great contrast to his shorter, wider form. She was dressed in business suit-like outfit that should've been too tight to wear yet it did not seem to bother her in the slightest. Her red hair was tied in to a firm ponytail that almost reached her back from being so long. Despite being a rather beautiful young woman, she held an ugly expressionless mien.

"Ms. O'UGerly." The scary school librarian said his tone sounding forced.

"Tantrum," the young woman corrected her tone equal to the older man's.

Astrid could practically see the tension radiating from the two adults before her. In order to prevent an all out brawl in the library Astrid coughed awkwardly on purpose, gaining the two respected librarians attention.

"Ere, right." Harry straightened himself up, pushing his drooping beard under his belt (Astrid inwardly gagged while the others did show their genuine disgust) and hobbled past the students. He walked straight toward the same front doors Astrid, and the gang had only just walked through minutes before. He paused his procession long enough to glance at Tantrum before scowling and hurrying along his way. The doors were opened and closed with a large slam.

"Hi, Tantrum." Fishlegs waved shyly.

Tantrum waved halfheartedly. "Hullo. Gobber called me, saying you lot need some books fer a project."

The teenagers nodded accordingly. "Very well, I'll show ya the section fer the books that should fit the criteria jus' fine. I had tah do the project when I was still in school." She shuddered. "Never found much use fer it, despite mah current situation."

"Should I ask what the school librarian was doing in the town library?" Camicazi inquired though she sounded like she was asking something else entirely different.

Tantrum's usual frown deepened further. "Harry and mah Da don't always see eye toh eye with one another. Naturally Harry finds it unreasonable fer me to be handlin' a job he believes he should be doin'." She turned left to one corridor of bookshelves to appear right in front of another wall of books. Tantrum causally walked to her left, going down another hall again.

"Tch, figures a \*\*man \*\*would think a girl can't handle things on 'er own."

"I think any woman can do fine by themselves," Snotlout started rather smoothly before messing it with getting ahead of himself. "But any lady can ask me fer an extra hand around," he didn't get time to finish when abnormally large book fell on his foot. Seconds later Snotlout whined while keeping his mouth shut.

"Snotlout goes after any woman with breasts." Astrid sighed with an eye roll.

Heather held back a laugh. "Funny, he doesn't show signs of interest toward Camicazi." She peered toward the shorter girl and couldn't help but notice the smug look on Camicazi's features when she looked at the pained Snotlout.

"Correction, Snotlout flirts with any girl that has breasts \*\*and\*\* is between the ages of fourteen and twenty."

Ruffnut overheard the two girls and snickered along with them.

"How much longer 'til we get there?" Tuffnut asked impatiently. While the almost-brawl earlier got his undivided attention for a few moments, it died down after the conflict ended, as well.

"Just a few ways and ah, here we are." Tantrum's lip held the ghost of a curled lip all the while she flourished her right arm toward an empty room. Well it wasn't exactly a room per say, more like three bookshelves surrounding a medium sized table covered with a few stack of books and several chairs partly tucked under the table.

"This should be a good place to start." Tantrum said, already making her way out of the non-natural room. "Jus' call if ye need anything."

"If she could hear us," Ruffnut muttered a few minutes later. She was in a rather stingy since Tantrum made her appearance, though Astrid couldn't blame her. Most women did feel self-conscious after coming across Tantrum. There was a reason she was the most sought after girl in her Seventh Year class back when the gang was still in Primary Three. Unfortunately, Tantrum was not only the most perused woman, but also the most available with her father, Ug O'UGerly, being very overprotective of his daughter. Astrid could count with one hand of the number of steady relationships Tantrum actually held after she graduated. It didn't help Tantrum much when her father requested her to have the most isolated job in Berkenshire, which was being the librarian for the town's library.

Astrid was more than happy to know her father didn't get overprotective on her. They had an unspoken understanding that Astrid was more than capable in handling herself in a boy's weak attempt at flirting with her. Snotlout was so far the only guy not to wise up in to seeing that she wasn't interested in him. Since he was harmless in his own right, Astrid tended to ignore him and vent her aggression when Bashyball practice came around.

Bloody, but effective.

The rest of the half-hour passed unceremoniously with the gang settling with a routine of finding a book, vaguely skimming through the first pages, then chucking away before doing the whole procedure all over again. Fishlegs was the only one still reading the first book he picked up while Heather was reading the backs to inquire about the summary until she would find a book that would catch her fancy. Camicazi attempted (read attempted) to entertain herself by stacking large amount of books into a pile and played a haphazard game of \_Jenga\_. Fishlegs was so immersed in his book that he didn't

even try to stop her. Astrid sat idly, watching her friends with no book in her hands. Astrid knew that her personal library did not have the exact books Gobber would approve to read since the project required a student to pick out a book they never even read before.

\_I might as well do something with mah time here.\_ Astrid finally decided to leave the room. If she were in a library, it would be better for her to invest in the opportunity and actually go find a book.

"Where are yoo goin'?" Camicazi was the first to ask. Her Jenga stack toppled over Fishlegs by mistake.

"Gonna go look around fer a bit." Astrid responded without a beat.

"Didn't ferget yer book now did ya?"

\_Of course, Ruff' is wise enough to pick out mah lie. \_"I didn't. I was thinking about getting something else fer my interest. This is a public library after all."

With that said, Astrid left the others to their own devices.

\* \* \*

><p>Traversing through the makeshift halls weren't all that easy with no Tantrum to guide you. Despite that handicap, Astrid was not the least bit phased. She had been inside the library plenty times before with her mum; it was easy to find the front door. But of course that wasn't the destination Astrid was looking for. She was still searching for one book that would be at her reading level and fit the criteria for Gobber's appointed task.<p>

\_There has to be one book here that is good enough to look over.\_ Astrid thought in bitterness. Sadly she had no such luck. Most of the books she noticed were titled with the oddest of names; \_The Encyclopedia Barbaria, Swordfighting with Style, \_and even stranger, a book that looked like a manual on training a shark for a pet. Astrid always thought her village was different for once being a Viking's settlement, but now she was starting to believe there was something very bizarre going on.

She turned away toward a new area and started to go one way until something caught her eye. On the other side of the hall, a shelf's wooden frame stood opposite to the sill was the burnt stamp of a red circle showing a fish. Astrid stared at the image, curiosity getting the better of her, as her feet began to move on their own. While the last bookshelf clearly held a few oddities, this one, \_\*\*oh\*\*\_, \_this one, took everything else by storm.

One book bound with leather lay resting on a lone shelf. No other book could be seen in sight. The title was the first thing that caught Astrid's attention.

"\_The Book of Dragons \_by Bork EinarÃ°r \*(1)\*? Weird name." Astrid observed while pulling the book from its place. Her eyes barely glanced at the cover before her eyes widened.

\* \* \*

><p>"One copy on <em>Bowen's Book of Botany</em>." Tantrum said while stamping the book's designated page. She handed it back to Fishlegs. "Have fun with that."

"Oh, it will be a very fascinating read I'm sure." Fishlegs replied with a smile.

"Yeah, yoo do that. Next!"

The line for the book checkout couldn't have been any longer to Astrid. For the first time in a long time, Astrid could remember; she actually felt impatient. She never felt more hurried in all her life. Sure she had those moments wishing one class would end quicker, but what normal teenager never felt that way? Astrid wanted the line to dissipate faster so she could get out of the library quickly. She didn't even care what the context of the book was. All that mattered was for her to take the book and go to Hermit for some answers. He had to come clean sooner rather than later.

"Astrid, yer next." Tantrum called out to the blonde. She quickly got out of her thoughts-the twelfth time that day-and walked down the front desk. Astrid then realized that she and Tantrum were the only ones inside the library.

"Yer friends already left," Tantrum explained, almost like she read Astrid's thoughts. "Most of them weren't happy being cooped up in here. Can't blame them really."

"You could always get a different job elsewhere you know." Astrid suggested.

Tantrum scowled. "Yeah, if my father wasn't being so-so, argh!" She slammed her hands on the desk, a small thump being heard seconds later. "I just want to do one thing on my own fer once without dear old Dad telling me otherwise. Be grateful yer father allows yoo freedom, Astrid."

"Yer dad cares about yoo," Astrid replied, handing the book over. "All adults have a weird way of showing it, especially in a town like this."

"Ain't that the truth," Tantrum concurred. She looked at the book with her eyes squinting and pursed lips. The flaming redhead made the traditional 'no' gesture before handing it back to Astrid. "Put that where yoo found it and don't look fer it again."

Astrid was gobsmacked. "What? Why not?"

"This book isn't allowed to leave the library's premises."

"Isn't this supposed to be a **\*\*public\*\*** library? Yoo know a place where anyone can borrow a book an' keep it until the due date?"

"That book," Tantrum motioned toward the book's spine. "Has a red herring on the side. Any book with that symbol isn't allowed any removal from its location."

"Who came up with that dumb rule?" Astrid asked, exasperated.

"By order of the town council." Tantrum answered swiftly almost as though she had this conversation before.

Astrid was dumbfounded. "How can a book be banned if that damn thing is in the library?"

"No need to use language here."

"I'm jus' saying this whole thing sounds ridiculous."

"If yoo have a complaint, tell it to the council."

"Yoo mean Mayor SkÃ¶ll? Because that's pretty much the whole council in a nutshell." Everyone knew that SkÃ¶ll had the last say in everything. Arguing with him was out of the question. SkÃ¶ll's word was law since everyone was too afraid to oppose him. But right now, Astrid didn't care for that. She was going to read the book in her hands and show it to Hermit. He had to see what she saw.

"Look," Astrid began in a softer voice. "I really, really, \*\*really \*\*need to check this book out. I heard what yoo said about this needing to stay in the library but please, please let me take it out this once. I promise I'll bring the book back when I'm done with it. Just this once bend the rules a little bit."

Tantrum looked at Astrid with a look that showed her usual embittered expression, yet held something else hidden. "Yoo really want the book that badly."

Astrid nodded, her stomach feeling heavier than rocks. "Yes, I do."

Tantrum glanced at the book in Astrid's hands before looking back at her again. "Don't think I ever seen yoo beg either."

Astrid forced her face to remain neutral before admitting, "Never wanted anything right now."

A small silence fell between the young and older adolescents. Both of them kept a steady gaze and never trailed their eyes off of one another. Neither one was the victor in this intense mental game. Only one would come out as the champion and claim the title of conquering hero for their own beliefs and-

"Fine yoo can take it. I always thought the rule was rubbish anyways."

â€|.Or maybe Tantrum really didn't care for the same beliefs as SkÃ¶ll. Clever girl.

Still Astrid felt hesitant and arched a brow. "Honestly?"

Tantrum nodded. "Aye. I hate the way SkÃ¶ll thinks he owns and controls everything. He's more of a control freak than mah own father."

"So yoo'll let me have the book?" Astrid asked, hoping to change the delicate subject.



"Yes," Tantrum quickly grabbed Astrid's arm before speaking in a hushed tone. "Don't let anyone know what happened in here today. No one must know that I allowed this. I may not like SkÃ¶ll, but I am afraid of what he could do to me and yoo should too. He's the sort of man that gets what he wants and does anything to keep it that way. Defying him is risky but I always wanted to punch that stupid grin off his bloody face. Be careful with that book, Astrid." Her gaze softened and for a brief moment her face appeared lovely. "I'd hate to see one of the kids I use to baby-sat get into trouble."

Astrid returned the stare in a similar matter, remembering the younger days of her youth. She remembered both the good and the bad. She inwardly winced. "All right then. I promise I will bring this back as soon as I can."

"Yoo better." Tantrum warned though some teasing was still heard in her voice. Astrid gave the book back to Tantrum for her stamp only for the older girl to gently push it away. "The less noticeable marks on it, the better. Having a fresh stamp in the book will lead to questioning."

"Why, does the mayor look at these books often?"

The averted glance from Tantrum answered Astrid perfectly. No more words were spoken all the while Astrid walked off and made her way to the front doors. She turned around once to look at her former babysitter, in a silent manner of saying goodbye. Astrid unzipped her rucksack, placed the book inside, and walked out with the door swung right open.

\* \* \*

><p><em>825/10\_

\_Today I did something unexpected. I borrowed a book in an effort to understand a boy better.\_

\_-Astrid Hofferson\_

Similar to the last entry it was lacking in detail, but it was blunt and to the point, just like the girl who penned it. Astrid leaned over at her desk to pull out the Book of Dragons and looked at its cover again.

"What sort of secrets are yoo hiding from me, Hermit?"

The cover of the book was the same as the wax dragon stamped from Hermit's letter.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>O.O Duh, duh, duh~! Quite the ending line huh? How is 'Hermit' going to explain that one to Astrid? I apologize for the bits of dialogue that sounded more like exposition than anything else. I swear by the power given to me as a writer; it will all be strengthened by real events to prove it. I might even pull a flashback in the story, who knows? well I do but you all can't know what's going to happen next or else it will be a spoiler. Though I will say this, the next chapter will focus on Hiccup again in his POV

and a familiar face will be making an appearance again. ^-^

And yes, Harry Hartsliceson is my take on the Hairy Scary Librarian from the How To Train Your Dragon book series. XD The last name is based on the tamed dragons he owns called the Heartslicers, and they \*\*do \*\*live up to the name. 'Harry' did make a slight cameo in the \_Going Down the Rabbit hole (again) \_chapter when he was the teacher that dragged Camicazi and Snotlout away when they made trouble before the mayor's speech, if anyone remembers that.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

\*\*(1) \*\*EinarÃ°r is Norse for bold. XD I figured that it would be lessâ€| anachronistic that way. XDD Not that ever stopped HTTYD before.

## 8. The Cave: Part 1

\*\*Q-A: \*\*I failed to realize that I had coincidentally uploaded the last chapter on Halloween. I honestly did not realize this until after it was up. XP Pretty convenient if you ask me. The same goes that there is a \_Mumford and Sons \_song titled \_The Cave \_(which of course is the song for this chapter). \*.\* That works so well for me in this chapter that you have no idea. It's perfect!

\*\*Disclaimer: \*\*The story is mine, but none of the characters are. I WISH I was this good at creating my own characters. XD

\* \* \*

><p><strong>The Cave: Part 1<strong>

\_August 24, 2010~\_

\_Good late-afternoon journal, \_

\_It has certainly been quite a while since I last wrote something in you. In fact, it was probably twelve weeks since I last penned something inside of you. Thankfully that was not as long as the hiatus from years passed... Fine it was a break from you for thirty years, but I was in an emotional life crisis during that period of time. Though I cannot recall what caused the hysterics.\_

â€|\_Probably not important. \_

\_Anyway I can tell already that you simply dying to know how my last few days have been. These last two days have been quite \_different\_ from normal.\_

\_I believe that I have made a friend.\_

\_Now hold the fanfare please whilst I announce what the great news is. I have made friends with a human. As implausible that sounds, I promise this is the upmost truth when I say I met a human girl (I am just as surprised as you must be) only the other day with her wandering around inside the castle. To say I was bewildered would be an understatement. There she was walking aimlessly through the halls, unsure of where she was heading and how she was going to find her way

out. Believe me when I say I heard her talk some bits here and there about wanting to leave but could not because of a previous obligation for her to retrieve a misplaced ball. It was nice to see the girl had settled her priorities straight.\_

\_Please note that the last line was meant to be taken sarcastically. I still find it incredible that someone would potentially risk their life for a silly little ballâ€|\_

Hiccup was scribbling away at his diary, retelling all of the events that took place in a few short hours ago. His mind and body still tingled from the excitement of it all. One of the first things he ever wished in his life had finally come true; he talked to someone from the outside. He genuinely talked to a girl and became her friendâ€|

\_Perhaps friend is too strong of a word. A confidant or ally could be more appropriate?\_ Hiccup sighed. \_Maybe asking Toothless about this wouldn't be such a bad idea after all.\_

Hiccup pushed himself away from his desk and then moved toward a window. Outside he could partially see the wide Norwegian Sea with its waves crashing along the steep cliffside. Hiccup was certain that if the drumtower's wall crumbled before him at that very instant, he would definitely fall into the ocean. The sky was a mix of orange and seashell pink with the clouds accumulating into a larger mass. A storm most likely was about to brew, and Hiccup was going to see a very odd sight from it soon enough.

\_I bet **\*\*she'll\*\***\_ \_be up there not too long from now; the one that Toothless mentioned to me. \_Hiccup thought with an amused smile. Another event started to place near the window. The sight he beheld was the sun beginning its daily setting. With a sigh, Hiccup started removing his vest and shirt.

One of the many hassles Hiccup had to go through with every time before the Transformation was for him to take off clothing that would easily be torn to shreds. The Transformation always led to Hiccup's body enlarging in to the familiar reptilian form in which caused the fabric to break apart and leave him shirtless. Thankfully by some twist of fate the pants would be spared thanks to the additional excess of fabric used to stretch when Hiccup's dragon hide would come out. The idea came to him one night after his mother sowed a hole in his trousers for his tail. He wondered if pants could be altered to make way for an appendage, why not give more fabric to prevent further damage? It was a revolutionary solution that earned Hiccup praise from his mother. Valhallarama was quick to remind Stoick of how brilliant their son got from time to time, those moments especially made Hiccup's ears burn.

Time began to go swift once again as the sun meet the horizon, and twilight began to show its nightly head. The Transformation transpired typically with no problems this time around. Due to all of the excitement from yesterday Hiccup had forgotten to take off his shirt, which had lead to it ripping at the seams and leaving his already loose-fitting pants alone. This time around Hiccup made sure to not make that same mistake again.

\_Good to see everything in order here.\_ Hiccup looked over at his half broken mirror. The looking glass (or better yet he) was tall

enough for him to see his body from head to toe-talon. \_Nothing out of the ordinary here.\_

THUMP!

\_Well not anymore at least. \_

Hiccup smiled wearily toward his fellow Night Fury, who sauntered into the room with a proud look. Hiccup fought the urge to roll his eyes. It was common knowledge for him to note that dragons were known to be vain and proud of themselves (not that he would ever tell that directly to Toothless' face of course).

"\*\*You look like you're in a good mood tonight." \*\*Hiccup said to Toothless.

The Night Fury bared his teeth in to a large grin. "\*\*I had a good day back at the cave. Guess who finally showed up Hookfang for being a show-off?"\*\*

Teasingly Hiccup feigned ignorance. He scratched his chin, pondering. "\*\*Do I wonder; could it have been that acquaintance of yours eh-Meatlug was it?"\*\*

Toothless snorted with a grimace. "\*\*Me of course, you silly Ground-Lover."\*\*

"\*\*I do like being on the ground, thank you very much. I was only teasing. I knew you've been wanting to fight Hookfang for weeks now." \*\*

"\*\*It wasn't much of if it lasts for half a Shot Recovery." \*\*Toothless stated with an eye roll.

Hiccup hummed in understanding.

Dragons did not (usually) track time in the same matter as humans with wound-clocks or a handmade calendar that Hiccup made for himself once. No, dragons rarely count the days or minutes in their existence since they tended to live for long periods of time that exceeded the puny lifespan of a mere person. But for those rare moments that did need some form of an event to be counted for, dragons would monitor the time it took for their inner flames to return after using their shot limit. Since Toothless' time to recover his shot limit, along with other firebreathers, took about five minutes in human time it meant that his fight with Hookfang only lasted about half of that.

"\*\*Did you get hurt?" \*\*Hiccup looked over at his friend, concerned for his well being at the moment. Toothless was a risk-taker half of the time. When his mind became set on something, Toothless would see that he would finish what he started.

Toothless shook his head. "\*\*Naw, I'm fine. I think Hookfang got it worse though. His poor ego got bruised big time." \*\*He growled a hearty chortle.

Hiccup sighed. "\*\*One of these days you'll get yourself killed for your cocky attitude and where would that leave me?"\*\*

Toothless stopped laughing long enough to smile at Hiccup and offered, **"There's still the idea that I brought up before."**

**"No."** Hiccup's response was quick. **"I won't agree to it."**

The normal shaped Night Fury sighed before frowning slightly at his friend. Toothless opened his mouth to make a witty retort when he spotted something wrapped along the dragon boy's head. **"What's that you got there on your head?"**

Hiccup nearly froze on the spot. He had completely forgotten about the bandages he placed on his head subsequently after Valkyrie's departure. Due to the haste construction the white bands weren't Hiccup's best work and did little to soothe the back of his head.

Nervously Hiccup looked at anything wasn't Toothless. **"Oh, um, I hit my head earlier today when I tripped over a loose board."**

Hiccup instinctively moved his hand to scratch his head but quickly decided against it. He prayed silently to both the Christian and Norse Gods in hope that somehow Toothless would believe the fib.

The Night Fury ducked his head to the side with his eyes widened in inquiry. His nostrils flared when he picked up a new scent on Hiccup.

**"You smell different. Smells like something sweet."** Toothless quirked to one side; his curiosity growing all the more with these unexpected discoveries.

**"Yeah, very sweet."** Hiccup's mind trailed off to the scented hard ball and brash Valkyrie. He inwardly shook his head. He couldn't think of **that** **right now**.

**"It must have been from that new plant that I found earlier today."** Hiccup replied. He was internally beating himself for making up more lies to his only friend in his small, empty world.

Toothless narrowed his eyes for a moment before replying, **"Okay, then."**

**"Okay."** Hiccup echoed uncertainly.

**"Fine enough for me."** Toothless replied before waddling toward the desk. He bumped his nose gently at one of the legs. **"I think you still owe me that picture-thingy of me, right?"**

**"He sure let go of that one easily."** Hiccup thought mildly at first before his worries eventually set in. If there was one thing Hiccup knew about his friend Toothless, was that he never lets things go without a fight.

This time the fight would last much longer than half a Shot Recovery.

\* \* \*

><p>The remainder of the evening went along quietly. Hiccup had finished Toothless' portrait before sunrise with enough time for the Night Fury to return back to the cave. The cave that Toothless had mentioned before was where the dragons of Berkenshire lived. There was no secret island or a lost city beneath the ocean, just a long forgotten series of tunnels deep underground where the large reptiles called home. It was the very same place Toothless had been failing at tempting Hiccup to go with him. Hiccup knew Toothless meant well, but there was one part in the back of his mind that insisted for him to remain at Haddock Castle. Most of it had to do with the promise he made with his parents, and the other was the fear of not being accepted by the wild dragons. Oh, and there was the whole idea that the dragons would probably roast him alive if they ever found out about his dueling half-human self. That would be bad.<p>

The rest of the early morning was devoted to Hiccup sleeping the precious hours he missed from spending time with Toothless. He wished there was some way he could teach the concept of time to his friend. He'll most likely have to work on that in the future. Hiccup was so exhausted from the previous evening that he barely stirred when the Transformation returned him back to his human form. By around early afternoon Hiccup did eventually roused from his slumber, waking with his head splitting into another headache and the half of his room in a mess.

\_And so we start off today with a welcoming sight. \_Hiccup occupied himself while shuffling a few loose papers that fell from the desk. He continued cleaning the discord that befell his bedroom. With his mind now set on cleaning, Hiccup continued with his chores around the castle. After acquiring a few bits of produce from the garden, a slice of kitchen-made honey-bread, and a kindly donated fish recently given from Toothless, Hiccup had a short lunch along with some well water for a drink. The day being surprisingly sunny; Hiccup decided to venture out into the garden again to sit aloft in the apple tree. He had been on that old tree plenty of times before to know how safe it was. The tree was so safe and secure that Hiccup only had to fall two feet this time around instead of the usual three when he would rest upon the weeping willow.

\_Damn my fumbling feet. \_Hiccup cursed. \_Must I always be a blunder at everything I do?\_ He wiped his bottom of the dirt and fallen leaves. He heaved out a sigh while inspecting the branches to see if his food remained where he fell off. All of the food was still resting on the branch.

Hiccup frowned. "The gods and Lord above hate me. It all makes perfect sense now." He spread his arms slightly before sighing again. "Most people my age have to suffer with pubescent mood swings or bodily disfigurement across the face, but not me. I have turn into a dragon-human thing and never age forever!" Instantly Hiccup covered his mouth, berating himself for shouting. He wasn't certain if someone heard him or notâ€| but with the alarming number of people apparently slogging up to his estate Hiccup did not wish to take any chances.

He was still getting use to the idea of one human knowing that he lived in the castle; he couldn't have the rest of the village marching up.

\_Like in mobsâ€|great big-No, I am not thinking those dangerous thoughts.\_ Hiccup berated himself again. His mind started to wonder if Valkyrie would keep her word and come back. \_ I will trust Valkyrie and hope for the best. Just as long as she doesn't bring a mob here either.\_

\* \* \*

><p>That afternoon followed with no unexpected visits, much to Hiccup's relief and slight depression. A part of him wanted Valkyrie to return again. She did promise to see him until his injury recovered. He did question exactly how long his bruise would last and how many visits in between Valkyrie might make. He shook his head after closing the door to his cleaned room. Hiccup knew dwelling on those sort of thoughts was dangerous business. Despite the insufferable attitude emitting from the blond girl, Hiccup did miss her company. She was the first visitor in at least two hundred years.<p>

Exactly 200 years had passed since Haddock Castle had visitors.

That demoralizing thought rightfully made Hiccup feel old. His depression evaporated just when he heard a familiar thump at his tower's wall. Quickly Hiccup hurried over toward the window's ledge to see if he really wasn't imagining it all. To his befuddled surprise Toothless was climbing across the wall, scaling the wall just as he would walking across the floor. He beamed toward Hiccup his namesake before climbing all the way up and plopped down to the floor.

\_Well I guess this would count as an unexpected visit.\_ Hiccup could not remember the last time he seen Toothless in the daylight.

"\*\*I couldn't wait," \*\*Toothless said as though he was reading Hiccup's mind. \*\*"What happened during that storm the other night was so amazing!" \*\*

Praying to every religious entity that his Dragonese was still translatable as a human Hiccup stammered, \_"Okey woz\_ sna?\*\*(1)\*\*"\_

><em>

Hiccup meant to have said, 'Oh, was it?' but had mistakenly said 'Okay was it's not.'

Dragonese was a language much older than any human tongue Hiccup would ever learn to speak. The trick to decipher Dragonese all came from hearing the words spoken between the growls in a dragon's voice. Mostly dragons had excellent hearing, allowing them to hear the vowels being uttered. When Hiccup became his bi-pedal dragon form at night, his hearing was hypersensitive to a dragon's thus allowing him to understand Toothless. Now that didn't mean Hiccup couldn't understand his friend at the moment, it only meant that interpreting the near-silent words in Toothless' growling was more of a challenge.

Toothless' plates perked up in confusion. He was a little unsettled by the odd choice of words Hiccup had said. It reminded him of the first day he was teaching the dragon-boy to speak his tongue all over

again. Knowing how to be patient with his friend Toothless nodded.

"\*\*Yeah, Stormfly did this thing in the air and maneuvered around to avoid the lightning strikes and the Thunder-chasers. You should've seen it.\*\*"

Toothless was slow with his words and paused between each syllable.

Hiccup was grateful.

"\_O-o-h, yow coglet-horra\_\_Storm-\_\_\*\*fly\*\*\_\_â€|\_\*\*got caught up with some Skrills huh? Well I was too busy sleeping to notice any of that." \*\*Hiccup replied, silently relieved he could hear Toothless properly again. All he needed was to focus more on the dragon and nothing else. \*\*"And here I thought you hated thunderstorms." \*\*

A soft growl was uttered from the Night Fury. \*\*"I \*\*\_\*\*don't\*\*\_\*\*. I justâ€| happen to prefer being on the ground for once when that happens."\*\*

Hiccup fought the urge to roll his eyes at Toothless' weak excuse.

"\*\*The storm ended last night so I decided to come and see you now since I couldn't wait.\*\*"

"\*\*Wow, I have never had a friend brave the horrors of the daytime for me." \*\*

"\*\*Ha, ha, keep up with the sarcasm why don't ya?" \*\*

Hiccup chuckled. He was starting to feel glad that Toothless came to see him untilâ€|

"\*\*So, about the offer of going to the cave with me-"\*\*

"\_Nee-ah-\_\_\*\*No." \*\*Came Hiccup's swift answer. He was not going to have this conversation again.

"\*\*You didn't let me finish." \*\*Toothless whined.

"\*\*We're not talking about this, Toothless. I do not need to go. I am perfectly fine here.\*\*"

"\*\*Are you the one that's saying that, or is it your father's rule?" \*\*That stung a little to Hiccup. \*\*"You can't just live the life your parent laid out for you.\*\*"

"\*\*I am not living what \*\*\_mi-\_\*\*my father told me to do," \*\*Hiccup snapped, his tone rising above its usual tenor. He heaved a sigh, walked over to the trapdoor opening the lid and climbing down the steps. \*\*"It does not matter. What happened between my parents and I is none of your concern.\*\*"

"\*\*Then why are you avoiding the obvious truth?" \*\*Toothless poked his head through the door, shouting at Hiccup's retreating form.



Hiccup was getting more irritated by the minute but stubbornly ignored the dragon and continued climbing. He finally finished stepping down the ridiculously long ladder and planted his feet on solid ground. When started to walk out of the tower, his presence was bombarded with a glowering Night Fury.

"\_Woh fix yowâ€|" \_Hiccup trailed off, almost asking how did Toothless followed until he remembered, \_Dummy. He's a dragon that can \_fly \_in the air and is incredibly fast. \_

"\*\*That was not funny." \*\*The dragon hissed with narrowing eyes.

"\_Hoody-\_\*\*Who said I was trying to be funny? And I am not avoiding anything. I \_am\_ perfectly fine here." \*\*That was a complete lie, but Hiccup wasn't going to let Toothless know that. \*\*"I feel safe here. I have been living in this castle for all of my life."\*\*

"\*\*But how long can that last?" \*\*Toothless asked thoughtfully. \*\*"Humans will want to go inside this castle \*\*\_\*\*eventually\*\*\_\*\*, Hiccup." \*\*

\_Are you so right about that one. \_The cursed boy though miserably. He and Toothless walked along side by side before finding themselves in the main hall.

"\*\*Someday you'll have to find somewhere else to live." \*\*The dragon sighed wistfully before he continued.

"\*\*I can still remember how dragons once lived on land. My kind can't do that anymore thanks to humans growing in both packs and strength. You can't hide here forever, one of these days a human might just tumble inside and see you as a dragon." \*\*

\_Again with him being so spot on. \_Hiccup inwardly sighed. He had no other choice but to coax his friend with a false sense of security.

\*\*"Please, no sane human would come anywhere near this castle. Even if all the houses in the village burned down and this was the last place for them to all live in."\*\*

As if on cue, those words Hiccup just said were completely contradicted.

KNOCK-KNOCK!

Toothless' fin plates sunk. \*\*"What was that?" \*\*

Hiccup felt his heartbeat quicken. \*\*"I am not a hundred percent certain of what it might be." \*\*

The knocking commenced once more, with Hiccup's heart plummeting toward a deep abyss.

Through the smallest of cracks in the wooden doors, the sound of a familiar voice was heard. "Hermit, are yoo in there?"

And now Hiccup's vital organs fell to the abysmal through a large

splat.

Toothless' eyes narrowed. **"That sounds like a human."**

**"Let us not jump into any conclusions now."** Hiccup struggled to form the next excuse when Valkyrie knocked at the door a fourth time. **"I'll go check it out, you just stay. Put. There. J-g-you know what I mean."** He gave Toothless a stern look to show how serious he was. Silently-reluctantly-Hiccup walked over toward the door and creaked it open ever-so-slightly to see Valkyrie standing barely a yard away.

Hiccup cursed under his breath.

"I know yer in there." Valkyrie stated as a matter of fact. She titled her head with her eyes staring straight at Hiccup's. "I can see yoo looking at me right now."

"Eh-heh. Valkyrie, hello, Valkyrie, greetings, Valkyrie, hello thereâ€¦| Valkyrie."

There was a slight pause between them before Valkyrie said, "Yeah there something we need toh talk about. **Now**."

\_Oh, the gods in all cosmic forces do indeed hate me. \_"Uh-um, yes I would gladly talk with you anytime," as he said that Hiccup noticed in the far horizon the sun was beginning to drop.

\_Oh Fate, such a cruel mistress. \_"Actually I inexplicably just became very busy and cannot entertain for today." Hiccup was ready to close the door when Valkyrie stuck her foot between, blocking the door's path from the threshold.

"There have been something odd going on around in Berkenshire since after I met you, Hermit."

**"It's a \_human?"** \_Toothless' cry of alarm could be heard even from where Hiccup stood. **"I can see its foot."**

Hiccup's heart was beating in time with each breath he took. Beads of sweat were already pouring down near his brow. He was in between two dangerous ends. One end involving his most loyal friend figuring out the truth in the worst way possible and the other one looking like she was ready to go hunting... hunting for a soon to be transformed dragon-boy.

**"That is it. Fear or no fear, I am not taking no for an answer this time."** Toothless declared before charging to where Hiccup stood. The Night Fury grabbed a hold of Hiccup's tunic that was starting to feel rather tight on the boy as the Transformation was closing in on him.

"I mean it." Valkyrie insisted oblivious of the silent struggling going on in front of her. "Normally I don't care what people do around if it doesn't directly involve me, but there is something strange that I can't get my mind off of it and yer in the middle of it."

As if adding lemon juice to the wound Toothless tugged on Hiccup again, making the poor boy jerk slightly to the ground. He looked at

his hand momentarily and started to see black talons replacing his regular thumbnails.

Valkyrie gave him a wary look before rightfully adding, "Or yoo're the cause of it."

\*\*\*Heave-\*\*\*

\_Please don't. \_Hiccup closed his eyes in fear.

\*\*\*-ho." \*\*One last pull and Hiccup was now being helplessly dragged away by Toothless. The Night Fury ignored the slowly transforming dragon-boy's yelps and pleads as he started off to another room with a window facing the sea.

Hiccup felt shame in his defeat while the Transformation was finally rearing its ugly head upon himself. \*\*"I hope you're happy now, you useless reptile."\*\*

\*\*\*I will be once I take ya back to the cave." \*\*With his snout, Toothless opened the window, opening agust of the ocean breeze that wafted across Hiccup's face. Even when being held upside-down Hiccup could see Toothless spreading his wings once he was perched on the window ledge.

\_Oh, the Gods indeed hate me, \_was all Hiccup thought as his Transformation was nearly completed and Toothless began to flap his wings into the twilight.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Been a while since I updated a week after another chapter. Or at least it feels like it. XD With exams coming up for me I believed you all deserved a special treat. I have no idea what will be in store for me these next two weeks but please bear and POSSIBLY give me encouragement for my exams? I REALLY don't want to screw up with these so pray to Odin with me and everything will be ok. Sadly I can't say the same for Hiccup though.

Poor boy his relationship with Toothless won't be the same again. And his relationship with Astrid/Valkyrie was already walking on broken glass. What will happen next?

\*\*(1) \*\*And for those of you who are wondering, YES those few times Hiccup slipped when speaking Dragonese is same Dragonese humans speak when talking to dragons in the novels. I found an official Dragonese Dictionary on the how to train your dragon book website for \_Dragonese Day \_(yes that actually exists apparently).

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 9. The Cave: Part 2

\*\*Q-A: \*\*Due to the fact that I am currently brain-dead on knowing what to write for Astrid's chapter I decided to continue where we left off in \_The Cave: Part 1. \_:D Won't this be fun? We'll get to meet Toothless' friends and get to learn even more secrets concerning Hiccup and the mysterious Curse. These back-to-back chapters should also balance out the 2nd and 3rd chapters with being in Astrid's pov.

:D I'm a genius like that.

I also want to thank you all for allowing OUaC to reach over 50 reviews!

**\*\*Response to Guest Reviews: \*\***

\_Guest \_(from chapter 2): \_I'm actually from the United States. I did plenty of research on the United Kingdom educational system while working on this storyâ€|. \*Speaks in a whisper\* I used Wikipedia.  
XD

**\*\*Disclaimer: \*\***None of the characters are mine. The story is inspired by several other sources, but made by my own though process.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>The Cave: Part 2<strong>

There is a fine line between friendship and kidnapping.

Friendship means trust and support between two people. Kidnapping, on the other hand, means being forcefully dragged away into the darkest pits of what could be considered the Earth's centerâ€|or at least that is what Hiccup felt while being dragged by his alleged companion. Toothless had not loosened his grip on Hiccup since the flight started; he wasn't even answering any of the important questions the dragon-boy was asking him. Once Hiccup saw the large opening between the rock and sea all of his words fell flat upon his lips.

\_Well that answers half of my questions. \_Hiccup thought with disdain. He had hoped that Toothless would have calmed down after flying and release him. Even in his reptilian form, Hiccup was smaller than Toothless and barely held as much muscle as the true dragon did. A very sad disappointment from Hiccup's behalf but not the biggest issue at the moment.

Hiccup shifted his weight, curling his back forward to lean toward the larger Night Fury's head. **\*\*"Please friend, I do not wish to go in that blasted cave. Can we just settle this dispute over like gentleman?"\*\***

**\*\*If you haven't noticed Hiccup, I'm \*\*\_\*\*not \*\*\_\*\*a man."**  
**\*\***

**\*\*You know perfectly well that is not what I meant." \*\***

**\*\*Doesn't matter," \*\***Toothless grunted as his green-yellow eyes narrowed in determination. **\*\*"It's high time you were with your own kind." \*\***

"What kind?" Hiccup spoke plain English under his breath.

Toothless quirked a hairless brow but remained silent. He was not going to care for the Dragon-boy's deep conflictions. The Night Fury had a mission to accomplish. Soundlessly Toothless flew down toward the nearly invisible opening with his wings enfolding close to his body in order for a sleek dive bomb.

Hiccup braced himself for the impending darkness inside the cavern. A few seconds passed before he reopened his eyes to adjust to the murky tunnel's dim lighting. Being a dragon at night allowed Hiccup to see with the same capabilities as other dragons did with their eyes glowing in the abyss. Remaining on that subject Hiccup could see small faint orbs blinking around the walls as Toothless flew further and further into the cave. His ears could pick up sounds that mixed with warbling growls that soon changed from hisses to the familiar Dragonese.

\*\*\*What has the Dark One bring with him this time?" \*\*

\*\*\*It looks a new killâ€¦|\*\*\*

\*\*\*Nay, the Dark One usually seeks \*\*\_saltswimmys\_\*\*\* -\*\*Hiccup mentally translated as fish-\*\*\*"where the water-spewing \*\*\_greenblood\_\*\*spends time." \*\*

If Hiccup weren't so terrified for his long extended life, he would've found all of this fascinating. Who knew another for dragon was greenblood? Did that imply that all dragons bled green blood? There was so much Hiccup was learning, too bad he was uncertain about surviving the night.

The air around the cave was growing hotter by the second. Once again, if it were not for his scaly hide Hiccup certainly would have been done for. Toothless dodged both stalactites and their ground cousins, stalagmites, before he finished flying through the maze-like area. Hiccup was sure he would need to below his unique call if he ever wanted to find safe passage out through one of the many holes. The larger Night Fury landed upon a wide ledge after letting Hiccup free fall to the ground.

After landing with a big thud the cursed boy glared at the dragon. \*\*\*"When I die, I will have you off my final Will and Testament."\*\*

Toothless snorted, unfazed by the threat. \*\*\*"Go ahead, there's nothing inside that human nest of yours that suits my needs." \*\*

Hiccup was ready to retort when he heard the sound of multiple flaps and loud calls beyond the reddened cliff near the ledge. Daringly he leaned his head forward to see several lizard-like masses heading up the rocky shelf. He reacted the same way a human would in the situation and quickly pushed him far away from the edge as possible and clung to the wall for some kind of support. Hiccup's instincts kept telling him to fly away, but his more reasonable mind said otherwise.

\_Everything is going to be okay,\_ Hiccup thought to calm himself down. \_Maybe not here but somewhere else it is definitely okay.\_

The dragon-boy's thoughts melted away when he was soon bombarded with four large shapes that landed right in front of him.

\*\*\*Well it's about time you got back." \*\* One of the four dragons said.

Toothless replied, **""'would've gotten here sooner if it weren't for this guy right here." ""** He motioned with his right wing toward Hiccup's frightened form.

**\_**Oh gods, this is it. **\_**Hiccup nearly closed his eyes before another dragons spoke.

**""Ooh~ is this the one you were talking about before Toothless?" ""** This voice was more feminine than the last and sounded curious with a hint of excitement. Hiccup was not entirely sure how to take in this type of development when he was interrupted again by two more voices; both being very similar, yet one pitch was higher than the other.

**""He sure looks like what Toothless described the other day."""**

The other voice-with the higher pitch-replied, **""How can you even tell it's a male?""**

**""Duh, 'cause Toothless called him one earlier."""**

**""I never asked you to correct me," ""the lower pitched one snapped.**

**""Who said I was asking, spark-belcher?""**

**""Well that's what I do. I breathe the sparks while you  
\*\_\*\*Barf\*\*\_\* out the gas."""**

**""Oh, like \*\_\*\*Belching\*\*\_\*-ing out sparks is any better."""**

**""Will you two quit arguing?" ""Another new womanly voice squawked in irritation. ""Your yelling is making my quills curl."""**

**""I'd say that would be an improvement on your look."""** It was the first voice that spoke to Toothless, slurred.

The new feminine voice made a growling noise that Hiccup assumed was meant to be a chortle. **""Who was the one that had his tail-area handed to him by a \*\_greenblood\_\* half his size?""**

**""S-shut up." ""**

Whatever reason Hiccup no longer felt nervousness or fear; these **\_greenbloods \_**did not seem like genuine threats-at least to his life-they were far too busy with arguing amongst themselves than to confront and oddly body-proportioned Night Fury. With heavy caution, Hiccup opened his eyes to see very few sites that no living man had seen in the last few centuries.

A large dragon with a snakelike head and tail was covered with bright red scales. The Monstrous Nightmare had two long slightly curled horns that reminded Hiccup of the antlers to a stag, but with no prongs. His back was covered with long finned spines that forked at the sides before melding into one in the end for the tail. Several black and orange spots sprinkled around the dragon with most of them being close to the wings that were wide enough to appear as stripes. They were also conjoined with two sharp claws on each wing that acted as paws that padded across the ground when the dragon shifted his

weight. The body was entirely supported by two large legs that each held three sharp talons. His yellow cat-slit eyes showed slight aggression convincing Hiccup not to show him any provocation, even if the Nightmare had over ninety teeth on each row of his mouth.

The dizzying smell of a strange substance wafted in the air that Hiccup quickly saw coming from one of the heads of a two-headed dragon that he remembered was called a Hideous Zippleback. Its two heads were even more serpentine than the Nightmare with straight horns with another one right on the nose of each head. The Zippleback was covered in light green scales; covered with exotic colored spots while their belly was a lighter yellow. It also had red rounded spines that went across the necks and back that joined together in a similar matter like the Monstrous Nightmare did. A pair of smallish wings was attached to the chubby body that was certainly contrary to the thin necks and matching tails. Four gray claws were on each foot that created large imprints on the ground.

Hiccup was so engrossed by the two large dragons that he didn't notice a new presence beside him. On his right, he saw what resembled four large boulders with a large row of sharp teeth and bright yellow eyes.

The Gronckle had a light brown stringy hide with purple blemishes attached to four stubby legs and the same number of claws in each foot. A pair of tiny wings was embedded on the dragon's back. The teeth poked out of the Gronckle's face similar to a certain Nightmare, Zippleback, and as well sharing the tusks of a boar.

Very sharp tusks that unsettled Hiccup.

The human instincts inside told him to run, but the better dragon nature told Hiccup that the row of teeth was stretching out for a smile. She was waiting for a greeting.

"\*\*Uh hello," \*\*Hiccup nearly squeaked in his accosting. He was still recovering from the Zippleback gas, along with now the dragon-breath puffing toward his face.

"\*\*Hi," \*\*the merry Gronckle roared back, her face centimeters away from his. And the dragon-breath was fantastic. Hiccup struggled with the urge to wipe away the tears in his eyes.

"\*\*Careful Meatlug, he looks like he's about to keel over."  
\*\*

"\*\*Humph, if you're trying to make a crack about my breath-"\*\*

"\*\*Of course not." \*\*The other voice interjected in an attempt to mollify Meatlug.

Hiccup leaned over toward the voice he recognized as the same female that complained about her quills earlier. Not too far off from Hiccup stood a Deadly Nadder. Stoick told Hiccup that not only were Nadders considered the most beautiful of the dragon breeds while also holding the hottest firepower, but also that was the least of Hiccup's worry. His father had told him that Nadders possessed sharp spikes spread all over their tails. When a Nadder felt threatened their tail spikes shoot upward and always were filled with venom. Bone-white spikes crowned across her head. Vivid blue scales-with scattered yellow on

the wings-covered the body. Four talons with one hind claw on each foot tapped over the earthen ground.

A Monstrous Nightmare, Hideous Zippleback, Gronckle, and one Deadly Nadder. They were all together inside a labyrinth filled with many more dragons. If his father were alive, he would certainly give a lot to be where Hiccup currently stood—or sat, seeing how his buttocks was currently resting on the ground.

All said to be extremely dangerous and to be killed on sight. Hiccup thought nervously. Even though he was in the form of a (somewhat) presentable dragon, there was still a feeling of dread pooling inside his stomach. The people of Berkenshire once feared dragons, back when they customarily raided the village. Huh, that struck a cord in Hiccup. He had forgotten about the fact that dragons had seemingly ceased their constant attacks at one point. Unfortunately for Hiccup he could hardly remember when that exactly happened either. Without a doubt, Hiccup would have to re-read his journal for the exact date.

If I ever get back home, that is. Hiccup reflected. He still had to figure out a way to escape. Logically he could fly back to his tower, only he could not see where Toothless was flying inside that tunnels, so that idea was not going to work. There was of course his special roar that he could use to find a way out, but the roar was not at all subtle in sound. Toothless could surely hear the call being made. Hiccup continued thinking of escape plans right when he felt a small gust of hot air near his feet.

"Whoa," Hiccup yelped in alarm while backing away to what he was hoping to be a wall when all he felt was empty air. It took him seconds to apprehend that he almost slid off the rock. His eyes peered over the ledge to see a very deep drop down the narrow trench. Meatlug staggered over to where Hiccup currently was and gave him a sadden frown.

"\*\*Sorry," \*\*the Gronckle apologized. "\*\*I wanted to lick your feet. They smell very nice." \*\*

"\*\*Uhh, thank you." \*\*Hiccup replied hesitantly. He plastered the most flattered looking smile he could, wishing not to upset the dragon that still did not understand personal space.

"\*\*Maybe flowers-" \*\*Hookfang started to say, suddenly appearing rather bashful. "\*\*Um, not that I would care for such those sweet smelling flowers."\*\*

The Nadder chortled. "\*\*Of course and you don't like looking at the butterflies that flutter upon each flower." \*\*

Hookfang was unable to come with a good rebuttal.

Toothless finally spoke with a snicker. "\*\*Good one, Stormfly." \*\*

"\*\*So who is your friend, Toothless?" \*\*All eyes peered to Hiccup, who started feeling as though he was about to be examined or dissected, whichever really.

Toothless breathed softly through his nostrils with his eyes staring



down at Hiccup. The dragon-boy glanced briefly toward the normal proportioned Night Fury.

"\*\*My name is Hiccup." \*\*He noticed the wild dragons trying to hold back their laughter. \*\*"Fantastic name, I know. My parents decided to go with a traditional family name, the kind that supposed to ward off evil spirits or something like that." \*\*

Truthfully giving a child a hideous name was to protect them from gnomes and trolls but Hiccup wasn't sure how that would translate to dragons. Much to his astonishment none of the dragons held any looks of apprehension. They looked more intrigued and curious with him than wanting him for dinner.

\_Hopefully. \_Hiccup added to himself.

"\*\*That sounds nice. I gave myself the name Stormfly since flying in thunderstorms is one of my favorite pastimes. I don't think my \*\*\_mama\_ \*\*or \*\*\_pappa\_ \*\*gave me an exact name." \*\*The Deadly Nadder sighed wistfully.

Hiccup was torn between wanting to learn more about this unusual trait paternal dragons did to their offspring and not wanting to pry into Stormfly's personal life-

He nearly doubled over when he adjusted his seating arrangement on the ground.

Since when did he start to show concern for a wild dragon's well being?

Surely his mother and father would not be pleased to see their boy interacting with dragons like they were companions. Although they wouldn't want Hiccup to speak with anyone in particular in the first place anyway.

"\*\*Ooh-ooh, maybe we can play Rock-Toss later." \*\*Meatlug suggested toward the thoughtful Hiccup, inadvertently changing the subject.\*\* "You might fair it better than a certain \*\*\_\*\*other\*\*\_\*\* Dark One." \*\*

Hiccup was able to see hisâ€¦\_friend \_avert his eyes away and give a snort along with an eye roll. \_Well at least I now know the Dragonese name for Night Fury. Why my \_friend \_never told me is beyond me.

-

Hiccup decided to ignore the other Night Fury and asked Meatlug, "\*\*What is this 'Rock-Toss' game?"\*\*

"\*\*It's easy to play. I pick up a rock with my mouth," \*\*the excited Gronckle scurried to where a few large rocks were lying and snuffled over them until picking the biggest one in the group and placing it in her mouth. Trough a slightly stuffed passage Meatlug elaborated to the best of her abilities,\*\* "and then I toss it over for you to catch." \*\*

Right after she said that, the large stone was thrown into the air and landed right on Hiccup's lap.

The dragon-boy grunted from the added weight. Thankfully from the

thick hide and stronger bone structure, Hiccup had no actual injuries. He still felt immense pressure from the heavy boulder.

\_Oomph, this game, packs a real punch. \_Still, Hiccup would rather play with something gentler and less prone to give him serious damage later on. \*\*"Perhaps we can try to play with something a bitâ€¦ softer."\*\*

\*\* "Softâ€¦ Soft?" \*\*Meatlug repeated contemplatively. She thought deeply for a minute until her black slits rounded, and her smiley-teeth widened.\*\* "Oh, I think I know a place where I can get something softer to play with." \*\*

Right when Meatlug uttered the word 'place' Hiccup almost rejoiced. This could be his chance! Meatlug might possibly leave the tunnels to find her soft thing, and Hiccup could follow her. It was a small window of opportunity, but a window all the same.

Hiccup let out a smile before stating, \*\*"Great,"\*\* the grin left him right as the flying Meatlug's wings fluttered swiftly with a hum. \*\*"-no wait, no don't. -"\*\* But it was already too late. The Gronckle flew rather quickly, in spite of her large body mass, and far enough for Hiccup to be unable to follow.

\_And now she's gone, so much for that escape plan. \_

It wasn't long until Hiccup felt another snout near him as Hookfang sniffed near the dragon-boy's tail.

\*\*\*Yep, definitely flowers." \*\*Hookfang narrowed his eyes, not threateningly but more out of intrigue. \*\*"Why do you smell like 'em? And you sure are a funny looking Dark One-\*\*\_greenblood\_\*\*." \*\*

\_Curse my desire to bathe regularly and my oddly shaped body proportions!\_ Hiccup inwardly winced. \_Why can't I appear as a normal Night Fury like Toothless, or better yet, be human so I do not have to live like this? \_

\*\*\*Oh, don't be mean on the young \*\*\_greenblood\_\*\*." \*\*Stormfly reprimanded the already bruised Nightmare. She gave Hiccup a sideways glance before continuing. \*\*"He's Toothless' friend and should be treated as such." \*\*

\_Well she seems nice-\_

\*\*\*Even if he does look a tad bit weird with those odd leaves on his hind legs" \*\*

\_Never-mind. \_Hiccup swallowed nervously when he remembered that most of his trousers had remained intact. If he didn't want to stand out more with his abnormal dragon shape, he can now draw even more attention.

\*\*\*So why did Toothless bring you here?" \*\*Belch asked, changing the subject. At least Hiccup was assuming the Zippleback head that spoke was Belch. He had trouble telling them apart.

\*\*\*Oh, uhâ€¦" \*\*Hiccup trailed off before giving Toothless a look.

The taller Night Fury grunted once before glaring at the ground. Well he wasn't going to talk.

\*\*\*He probably decided that it was time for me to meet all of you." \*\*Hiccup nearly bit his tongue from speaking. While lying in front of complete strangers wasn't as awful as lying to his friend, Hiccup still felt very guilty about the whole.

Stormfly hummed knowingly. \*\*\*"Well not everyone." \*\*

Strange to Hiccup, but not everyone else, Toothless' eyes turned into slits. \*\*\*"I hope you're not talking about-"\*\*

\*\*\*Yes. I. Am." \*\*Stormfly copied Toothless with her eyes also narrowing into small slits.

\_Why am I suddenly getting the feeling I have seen all this before?\_ Sudden memories of an over-inquisitive Valkyrie came into Hiccup's mind. \_Oh right. She must be very unhappy with me having left so abruptly. Hopefully she is not too angry with me. \_

\*\*\*Do we have to?" \*\*Hookfang spoke, stirring Hiccup out of his thoughts. \*\*\*"Last time we went \*\*\_\*\*he \*\*\_\*\*kept criticizing my posture." \*\*

\*\*\*You do need to work on that." \*\*Belch-no Barf, or maybe it was Belch, made a snide remark in amusement.

\*\*\*Let's just go and give him a quick greeting. I'm sure \_he'll\_ love to meet you, Hiccup." \*\*Stormfly promised with a smile. Or at least Hiccup was assuming the Nadder was smiling. It was hard to tell with her full mouth being a row of teeth poking out; the same went out for Hookfang, Bark and Belch, and Meatlug.

Speaking of Meatlug, she was hurrying back whence she came (wherever that was remained a mystery to Hiccup, unfortunately,) from the outside. Just as she promised Meatlug landed with a softer object in her mouth. A live sheep bleated while its head was poking between Meatlug's jaws.

\*\*\*Iff fawnd stumfing stoper twho plae wif." \*\*Meatlug attempted to say.

\*\*\*We can't understand you, 'Lug." \*\*Stormfly (Hiccup could not be sure with the teeth again) smiled in amusement.

The Gronckle spat out the shaken sheep and repeated, \*\*\*"I said I found something softer to play with." \*\*

Hiccup eyed the baaing sheep and couldn't help but sympathize with it, but he did not want to appear as a bad guest and thanked Meatlug in the best way he could. \*\*\*"I had no idea it would've been something likeâ€|this." \*\*

\*\*\*Oh, it wasn't so hard." \*\*Meatlug said sheepishly. \*\*\*"I found it eating the slimy sea grass along with its pack. They all wanted to play tag with me right when I landed. They got a head start with running and expecting me to tag them." \*\*

Hiccup found so many reasons as to why Meatlug was completely wrong

with how the sheep were really reacting for. **\*\*"And then you took one of them for more Rock-Toss if I am guessing correctly?" \*\***

Meatlug nodded. Stormfly stepped in, scaring the sheep in the process. **\*\*"We won't have time for that Luggy. We're going to introduce Hiccup to our other friend."\*\***

**\*\*"We don't really have to." \*\***Toothless muttered under his breath. Hiccup gave him a questionable look but said nothing. If the Night Fury was going to be keeping secrets like Hiccup, he was totally fine with it.

**\*\*"Let's go meet this **\*\*\_\*\*friend **\*\*\_\*\*of yours." \*\***Hiccup said with a slight smirk toward Toothless. **\*\*"It sounds like it will be very enjoyable."\*\*******

The deadly look that Hiccup saw from Toothless translated into, 'I hate you.'

\_Two can play at this game, Toothless. Whoever you are wishing to avoid I'll be meeting in a short time. \_

**\*\*"You heard the **\*\*\_greenblood\_\*\*, let's fly." \*\***Stormfly stretched her wings out beautifully.**

**\*\*"Now you're talking." \*\***Barf-maybe-Belch exclaimed with a cry of jubilation.

**\*\*"Let's get going already." \*\***Hookfang said; his teeth held some reddened piece of cloth. Hiccup was confused for a moment until his eyes lowered to the ground to where the sheep had been.

The sheep was nowhere in sight. Not even a trace of wool could be seen.

Hiccup hated how his mouth dried up making him unable to gulp.

**\*\*"Oh, no fair Hookfang. Wait until we all eat before you do." \*\***Meatlug carped toward the satisfied Nightmare.

**\*\*"Who are you supposed to be? My **\*\*\_mama\_\_\*\*?**" **\*\*\_Hookfang said sardonically.****

**\*\*"We can all grab something to eat later." \*\***Belch-or-Barf said to ease the tension.

\_Yes, maybe it'll turn out to be me if they find out the truth. \_Hiccup thought in despair.

He added to himself that removing Toothless from the Will would be worth it.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>You all must be hating me right now. I know I do. I've been home for like over a week and yet here I am almost slacking off for most of the time. I guess that's what happens when you are given so much free time and out from college for the first time. XP I won't slack off like this for the rest of my break, I

promise. I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. For the most part I had a lot of fun writing the personalities for the other dragons. I was trying very hard to not make them carbon copies of their riders from the film and shows. There will be some character development for them I hope. And for those of you missing Astrid, don't worry she'll be the star of the next chapter. This was just a callback from those back-to-back chapters with Astrid in the early part of the story.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 10. I'll Try

**\*\*Q-A: \*\***Wowâ€¦ almost 60 reviews and less than ten chapters into the story gosh you guys are amazing. ^-^ On another note, I am officially addicted to Berksgrapevine . com. That website is like the best thing if you're a HTTYD fan. I learned on Saturday, December 14 that around Christmas there will be a new HTTYD2 trailer. :D Isn't that cool?

Slight song inspiration for this chapter was I'll Try by Jonatha Brooke. Her voice is stunning if I do say so myself. Jesse McCartney's rendition is pretty good too, check 'em both out if you haven't already.

**\*\*IMPORTANT NOTICE:\*\*** I want you all to know that I won't be updating for a while because I want to focus on my Rise of the Guardians fanfiction story that I worked on since Christmas of last year. I took off work of it when I started college but now I want to start working on it again since it's been a while and I now exactly where this story is going and Seeing Isn't Believing is almost done. Please forgive me for this but I might make a HTTYD one shot around Christmas in honor of the new trailer that'll be coming out around that time. For when I'll be working on this story again might be around the middle of January depending on how soon I finish my other fanfiction and when I can adjust my schedule in school again.

**\*\*Disclaimer: \*\***I own nothing. XP I don't think I would do great in writing by deadlines as Cressida Cowell does. Here I go padding it out until the story starts. On with it!

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I'll Try<strong>

August 25th, 2010 ( at the grand doors of Haddock Castle)~

What the...? Astrid stared at the wooden doors, incredulously. No one had ever slammed a door in front of her before, what on earth-?

Did Hermit justâ€¦ leave?\_

A familiar emotion swelled up inside her: anger.

How dare him! After all the trouble she did to go to the castle right when it was getting dark, he had the balls to run off. For what? Since when do hermits not have enough time to talk with other

people?

\_Hermit was going to be surprised when he gets back.\_

Astrid stiffened. Since when did \_she \_start to care about being ditched by someone? Especially someone whom she referred to as a beanpole several times before? She did not care about the beanpole; she only wanted to get answers. There were no other obligations between themâ€|besides the fact that she injured him.

\_Two blows on the head. Yoo better be lucky that he probably can't file an arrest warrant. \_Astrid allowed an audible of relief from that news, and then felt something replace the anger. Feeling that staring at the doors weren't doing much good for her, Astrid decided to leave in order to forget the whole thing quicker.

Too bad her mind and heart had other ideas.

For some odd reason, Astrid started to feel a new emotion. She couldn't place her finger on what it was exactly. Pity? No, she was never admitting such a ridiculous thing. Disappointment made more sense to her than pity. Yes, she was disappointed that she couldn't ask Hermit about the dragon book seal matching the wax letter stamp. Disappointment was the feeling she had.

\_It's not like yoo're disappointed that yoo couldn't see Hermit tonight. \_The annoying thought bubble reared its ugly head in Astrid's mind. She wasn't disappointed about \_seeing \_Hermit. Why would she since all she cared about was finding the truth? Astrid reaffirmed that idea before she brushed away the other unwanted ones. She walked down the path away from Castle Haddock with the book still clasped tightly in her hands. Earlier Astrid took it out of her rucksack with the intentions of showing the seal to-

\_Nope, not even going to think his name right now, \_Astrid reminded herself.

"Well guess who showed up." Ruffnut's voice called out.

Astrid was no longer swimming in her recent thoughts when she found herself at the town square. The rest of the gang stood by the female Thorston twin.

\_Right, we were supposed to meet together by the arch. \_Astrid inwardly cursed. If it weren't forâ€|that guy, she wouldn't have mixed up her priorities.

"Sorry, didn't mean to make you all wait." Astrid apologized; her free hand scratched the back of her head.

"Yeah, we noticed." Ruffnut said sardonically while rolling her eyes.

"No, it's fine slacking off is good." Snotlout quickly came to Astrid's unneeded defense. "What you do is so..." He trailed off, struggling to find the best word to describe her. After so much strain (from what she could guess as straining) Snotlout came up with a compliment. "It's so 'Astrid'."

The groans of annoyance, coming from everyone, were barely

audible.

\_Urge to punch rising,\_ the newly named after adjective thought in her mind. Unknowingly, Astrid gripped her book tightly which led a few eyes to notice.

"Is that the book yoo chose fer yer English project, Astrid?" Fishlegs asked innocently as he pointed at the book in question.

While seething through her teeth, Astrid replied, "No, I already picked something else out."

"What's it about anyway?" Ruffnut asked in a very fake tone, being all too aware of her friend's pain.

Uncharacteristically, Astrid tried to be illusive with shoving the book in her bag. She brushed off Ruffnut's question.

"Nothing big. It was the first thing I saw on the library shelf and made the assumption it could be a nice paper weight fer a while," she lied.

The last thing Astrid wanted to do was show a nonsensical book about mythological beasts to the people whose opinions secretly mattered to her. She didn't want to appear foolish with them and wished for this whole experience to be over and done with.

"What is it about?" Fishlegs repeated Ruffnut's question with genuine curiosity.

Astrid held back a tired sigh. She had been pushed back into a corner with no way out. Begrudgingly, Astrid pulled the book out and practically shoved it in Fishlegs' hands.

"Dragons." Astrid breathed out.

Fishlegs flipped through the book with great enthusiasm as the others inched closer. Astrid masked her interest with apathy in an attempt to act like she didn't care. Despite that, she couldn't help but steal a glance toward the pages. The only things she could see from her quick glances were two illustrations of unusual creatures Astrid rightfully assumed were dragons.

"Ohh this looks neat. Can I read it after yoo?" Fishlegs asked a few minutes later after handing the book back to Astrid.

"Didn't think yoo were into that kind of stuff." Tuffnut snickered, completely reveling in finding out Astrid's apparent geekiness. Even Snotlout looked stricken by the news while eyeing the blond girl nervously.

"I'm \*\*not\*\*," Astrid snapped, shoving the book painfully into her bag. "Ok, I admit it, I borrowed the book out of necessity. Gobber did tell us to read a book we never looked at before, so I picked this one."

"I liked that one picture of the water-spiting dragon." Heather supplied kindly.

She was quickly given weirded looks.

"I thought it was cute." She added hastily while pulling a strand of her pretty black hair.

"That one that was gold looked pretty cool." Camicazi said with her eyes beaming hungrily after the atmosphere cooled down again.

"That Queen Fireworm one?" Fishlegs asked excitedly toward the smaller blond.

"Naw, the one that is gold but likes changing colors."

"That Whispering Death dragon did look seriously awesome." Tuffnut admitted.

"I was thinking that too," Ruffnut replied while glaring at her twin. "I was gonna say it first."

"No way I wasâ€¦. no wait did. Yeah, I did it first."

"That's not even a real word."

"Oh, what. Are yoo the word police now? â€¦Because if yoo are, yoo should've told me first." Tuffnut dumbly added.

"Yer an idiot." Ruffnut rolled her bluish-gray eyes.

"Well at least I'm not a Word Policeman, Haddock-breath." Tuffnut rebounded right before his sister pushed him to the ground and started punching him.

Snotlout snorted at the bickering twins before smirking over to where Astrid stood. "We both know that's just a stupid book that only mental patients read, right Ast-" he never got the chance to finish when Astrid punched him finally.

"Idiot." Astrid murmured under her breath before slugging her rucksack over her shoulder and stomping back home, never turning back to say farewell.

Once she graduated, Astrid was definitely going to take the first boat off of Unst for Moray.

The knuckles on the hand she beat Snotlout with ringed as blood rushed through that isolated area. She hated to acknowledge it, but that idiot jock had a strong jaw. A part of her wished she had worn her Bashyball gloves to give her some form of protection from the impact. The other part called her out for being a wimp and reminding her that Berkenshire girls didn't cry.

Because she wasn't crying right now.

Not at all.

Astrid was so busy not crying that she almost bumped into a fisherman carrying haddocks in a brown woven basketâ€¦while in his free hand held a harpoon covered in green-looking slime. Her head shot back, gazing at the fisherman before the widening blue eyes shrunk from confusion. She was surprised to find out that the man no longer



carried a messy harpoon in his arm, or an intricately woven fishing basket. The man only held a large white Styrofoam bucket that presumably had the fish. The ripe smell was a dead give away too.

Twice she had seen something strange today. Both of them caught her off guard and made her look at things more than once. She hated that.

\_Since when did I care about what other people do and don't do?\_ Astrid scowled irritably.

Unconsciously her mind went back to a certain someone that she really did not wish to think about again. Once more Astrid shoved those unwanted thoughts away while she hopped over the picket fence and then opened the door to her home.

Astrid pulled at her tie aggressively until its knot came undone. The gray woolen coat remained across her chest and arms as they were still chilled from the cold winds from outside. Even when autumn was far from approaching, Berkenshire always had freezing nights that made the strongest man sleep \_inside \_the fireplace.

After pulling her muddy boots off and placing them in the cupboard, Astrid staggered toward the kitchen where her father was sitting. From the way he held his tea mug and slouching in his chair it was almost like he never left home.

"Hey, Dad." Astrid greeted, her regular resigned manner slowly returning.

Erik Hofferson watched his daughter pulling the refrigerator door open as his eyes immediately spot her bruised hand.

"Decided to punch a tree out in the forest again, did ya?"

Astrid stiffened momentarily but remained calm.

\_Easy, he was bound to notice the hand. Yoo were secretly expecting this. \_

"Just a disagreement between friends, Dad. Nothing major." Astrid explained quickly, her hand clutching a can of soda pop while the other still held the refrigerator's door handle.

Erik raised a brow, his blank stare twitching upward. "'Nothing major?'"

Astrid pulled the can tab open, the sound of carbon dioxide induced bubbles emitting from the can. Small fizz bubbles climbed out of the hole before she swiped them away with a finger.

"Just a small tussle between friends." Astrid tried to enforce on the situation.

It didn't work.

Erik let out a tired sigh. "Astrid, we can't keep doing this. Getting yerself in these fights, they need to stop."

"I don't get into them on purpose," Astrid's voice wavered between sounding collected to barking. It was two months since the last time she tussled with someone. She always claimed that the other person started it, which was partially true. The rest involved her trying to defend herself or a friend. Mostly herself when her honor was being questioned.

She then added childishly, "And I wasn't even in a real fight."

"Then what was it?" Erik asked, genuinely curious about the whole situation his child got herself into.

"Nothing important." Astrid replied before realizing what she said.

"Must've been important enough fer yoo to get yer hand black and blue." Erik pointed out, not missing a beat. He stood up with his empty cup and placed it in the sink to wash. While scrubbing at the mug Erik continued with his rumination. "We've talked about how these fights aren't going to lead anywhere good fer yoo. The last thing I want tah do is get ye out of the town's jailhouse when yoo land in some real trouble."

"I'm not gonna be wound up in jail," Astrid said, her jaw tightening. \_I'll be long gone before any of that can happen. \_She added quietly to herself.

"It still can happen, a lot can happen from here before yoo turn 18 and leave this town fer good," Erik said knowingly but with a slight bitter tone in the end.

Astrid bit her inner cheek. She could never hide anything from her father. No matter how hard she tried.

"It won't be forever," Astrid wasn't a hundred percent sure on that. "I just want to get out of this place."

Erik sighed, conceding in defeat. "Very well, but that means yoo'll need to be in yer best behavior. I don't want seeing yoo gettin' aggressive off the Bashyball field now."

"I can't keep promises like that." Astrid bluntly said.

"Then I would keep yoo from practice then if this behavior keeps up."

Astrid stared at her father, incredulously. "Dad, that's not funny."

"I'm not joking." Erik deadpanned, his head shaking. He turned off the faucet before shaking his hands in the sink to dry them. "It's time yoo need to learn to control yer emotions better. I'm tired of cleaning up the messes yoo keep making."

"Well I'm tired that yoo think yoo need to clean up fer me. I can do things myself." Astrid snapped finally fed up with her father. Angrily she tracked from the kitchen, away from her father and away from the new mess she made.

\* \* \*

><p>Climbing, or stomping, up the stairs Astrid reached her bedroom with her uniform still on and carried her rucksack right on her shoulders. She opened her door with the velocity of a lightning strike and closed it with the same speed to spite her father.<p>

The one place her father never followed Astrid in was the sanctuary of her room. It was a modest place with a twin-sized bed in a corner with a blue and black quilt and sheets that matched the pillows.

Astrid turned her attention away from the bed when she realized how ironic the colors were.

The white walls were adorned with posters of football players and other sport teams that caught Astrid's interest. Beside her brown desk that stood opposite of the bed, was a small shelf filled to the brim with the books that were held on by sentimental reasons and the few that were once bought for school. A basic blue lamp (lampshade included) stood next to the thirty-year-old computer that needed way too many parts and reboots. Curtains covered the lone window that showed a lovely view of the forest. Sadly the charming view of the pine tree laden sunset wasn't enough to lightened Astrid's spirits.

Unceremoniously, Astrid dumped her bag by her keyboard and sat down on her chair with a grunt. She pulled out her homework by holding the bag upside-down which caused the Book of Dragons to fall out and land right on the spacebar and return keys.

\_That's going to leave a mark.\_ Astrid sighed as she removed the thick manual off her desk. She placed the leather-bound book on her bed preparing to simply leave it there until she would get tired and push it away when she wanted to sleep, but something prevent her from doing it.

Call it curiosity or some other annoyance, Astrid stopped to wonder what exactly caught her friends attention. With slight reluctance, she placed the book on her lap and opened up to the first page. It showed the title of the book again along with the author's name.

\_EinarÃ°râ€| isn't that supposed to be Bold in Norse? \_Astrid thought to herself before turning the page to the table of contents. The book was divided in to eight chapters or sections that started off with the first chapter written about the \_Boulder Class\_ dragons and ended with the \_Unexplained \_or the \_Ludicrously Hard To Find \_dragons\_,\_ it was written with different ink colors that Astrid assumed was done by a previous owner to the book.

Page after page held small biographies of each 'species' of dragons that were written in an old text it forced Astrid to consult her worn out dictionary to learn the terms and meanings behind the words that would've made William Shakespeare call out for being too dated.

The dictionary was a dead end for the dragon names though. Names like the \_Gronckle, Hideous Zippleback, Terrible Terror, Grapple Grounder, Thunderdrum, Timberjack \_\_Venomous Vorpent\_\_, Nanodragon, \_and many more that had names that only got stranger with each passing page.

They were uniquely designed by each illustration to give off intimidating appearances while also having the most bizarre abilities that Astrid was sure was made up. One dragon would set itself on fire when feeling threatened. Another could shoot acid and change into its surroundings. One other dragon could rip its victims limbs off with the use of its tongue.

The only two dragons caught Astrid's eye was the Deadly Nadder for its hot fire and the spikes that were shot out of the tail. For some reason, Astrid couldn't help but find that dragon rather beautiful with its crown-like horns that were on the dragon's head and the colorful wings that looked like they would glide gracefully in the air. It also had a fierce attitude to back up all that other dragon was called the Night Fury. While there were many others after, it was the first page she found with no picture of the dragon. It even had one of the shortest bios with the only vital information was for a person to never engage the dragon and if found, hide and pray it does not find you. The whole book was like some sort of hunting manual with each page ending with the words, "Extremely dangerous, kill on sight." With the exception of the Night Fury and a few others.

Astrid shook her head. She was starting to get excited like her friends were an hour ago.

None of them honestly believed the stuff in that book had to be true. Her excuse for being so interested in it had to do with the limbless, winged dragon on the cover that was almost identical to the wax stamp from his letter. It would seem everything began to fall apart when she got that damned letter. Why couldn't she have just left well alone and mind her own business? She wouldn't have argued with her father, or get embarrassed by her schoolmates, and probably not have that full investigation happening at school.

The easiest thing for her to do was blameâ€|that guy for all that had happened but Astrid started to remember that she was the one that volunteered to go inside the castle. She was the one that made the choice to go in and save the bashyball. And even she couldn't do that right since she ran out like a scared child. He was the one that brought out the ball in the first place and, somewhat gave it back to her. Again it was easy for her to put him at fault for everything but really he never meant to do anything horrible to her. Astrid couldn't count with one hand the times that guy did anything intentionally bad. From the way, he acted Astrid started to think he wasâ€|lonely.

He acted hesitant and nervous, around her and when she promised to see him again Astrid swore she nearly saw his green eyes widen for a brief second.

The boy desperately wished for companionship and Astrid wasn't going to give it. How could she? Astrid didn't want to befriend someone who would be in need of her and cling on. She wasn't looking for any attachments that would require her to be friends with someone that needed her. That's what made the friendship with her mates different. All of them could last fine on their own and didn't need to be looked after. They were able to take care of themselves perfectly fine. The only thing Astrid could think of doing was to politely tell him that she wasn't looking for a new friend and that she would leave once his head was better.

Astrid closed the book away and pushed herself off the bed to reach her desk. She already wasted enough time on childish nonsense about fantastic beasts. The stories she was told long ago weren't true. The things her motherâ€¦

As long as no one saw it, no one would see the Berkenshire girl alone in her room doing her best not crying.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Sorry for how long this chapter took. XP I'm so lazy right now, it's not fair for all of you. Boy I was pretty hard writing the last part of this chapter. This won't be the last of Astrid's angst unfortunately. Can't have a HTTYD story without some sad moments put in.

\_\*\*IMPORTANT NOTICE:\*\*\_ I want you all to know that I won't be updating for a while because I want to focus on my \_Rise of the Guardians \_fanfiction story that I worked on since Christmas of last year. I took off work of it when I started college but now I want to start working on it again since it's been a while and I now exactly where this story is going and \_Seeing Isn't Believing \_is almost done. Please forgive me for this but I might make a HTTYD one shot around Christmas in honor of the new trailer that'll be coming out around that time. For when I'll be working on this story again might be around the middle of January depending on how soon I finish my other fanfiction and when I can adjust my schedule in school again.

Merry (almost) Christmas and a happy Snoggletog!

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 11. I'm On My Way

\*\*Q-A: \*\*Ok, how many out there wish I was dead? â€¦hmm, not that many oddly enough. Sorry about how long it took for me get working on this chapter. Ugh, college life is hard when balancing schoolwork and playtime. \*Sheepish smile\* I was a bit preoccupied with my RotG story (which I DIDN'T finish yet XP) and this new fandom for a cartoon show that I've been obsessing over in the last two months. Again my fault entirely. But on the plus side I can have some time to write this story since Dragons: DoB ended and that new cartoon show I like won't be renewing its second season until later in the year (I hope, I've been reading it up and asking people on tumblr who said there will/might be a new season and)-ACK! There I go again, getting crazy over something non-HTTYD related. Let's just get this over with and start up again shall we?

This chapter was inspired by the song \_I'm On My Way\_ by the Scottish band, \_The Proclaimers. \_

\*\*Disclaimer: \*\*If I did own the rights to HTTYD it would've taken a WHOLE lot longer than four years to make the sequel or any of the novels from the original series. I'm that lazy.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I'm On My Way<strong>

If it were not for the ignited mouth from Stormfly and luminous body from Hookfang, Hiccup would have felt uncomfortable. The human-Night Fury was hardly afraid of the dark, but he certainly appreciated the warm glow coming off from the dragons' fire. He nearly slipped on the wet floor but was spared from falling with Meatlug's intervention.

"\*\*Wouldn't want you to break your wings now do we?" \*\*The Gronckle smiled a cheeky grin at him.

Hiccup coughed awkwardly to hide his embarrassed feelings.

"\*\*I never really like how cramped those tunnels are."  
\*\*Barf-or-Belch complained with his head scrapping above the low ceiling. Hiccup was grateful for being the second shortest member in their band.

"\*\*Why don't you go complain to the supervisor about it? Oh that's right, we \*\*\_\*\*don't \*\*\_\*\*have one." \*\*His twin snickered, his long neck and head wisely lowered to the ground.

"\*\*Cut the \*\*\_poo-poo\_\*\* will ya? You're stick in here as much as I am." \*\*

A small fireball from Stormfly shut them up rather quickly.

"\*\*Don't make me jump in and rip you two apart." \*\*

"\*\*But we're attach to each other how can she-" \*\*

"\*\*Belch," \*\*the left Zippleback's eyes narrowed knowingly. \*\*"That's exactly what she means." \*\*

"\*\*Ohâ€¦," \*\*Belch's eyes widened when he finally realized the meaning behind his other half's words. \_\*\*"OH~" \*\*\_

Hiccup had ignored most of their conversation with his own mind thinking over some serious thoughts. \_Who exactly is this mysterious stranger no one in the group seem to like talking about and yet give little information on who he is? He sounds like someone very important. If he commands much respect from this group of diverse dragons he must be a great beast indeed. \_

He started to mentally list out the potential dragons. A Thunderdrum would be a prime candidate, they were said to have gain their ear-splitting battle cry from Thor himself. If it were a Changewing, the acidic emitting dragon, it may possibly use its special scales to blend to its surroundings. Odin forbid if it turned out to be a Whispering Death.

Hiccup inwardly shuddered. He always found those dragons to be absolutely terrifying. He recalled mentioning about that species of dragon to Toothless once-No, he wasn't going to be thinking about that traitor for now.

The Grapple Grounder would be an unlikely choice for the supposed 'leader'. Their serpentine mannerisms held well in strength but not in quick maneuvering or firepower. Hiccup had to bite his tongue when

his thoughts trailed off to a Hogfly leader. Only when Helheim freezes over perhaps.

The cursed boy was very much wrapped into his thoughts that he almost stepped on Meatlug's back foot.

"\*\*Whoops," \*\*the Gronckle chuckled. "\*\*Watch your footing, Dark One. I might step on you in return." \*\*

Hiccup coughed, thankfully mistaken for a small laugh of his own by the rest (except Toothless, that reptile knew better). He thought that some form of conversation would ease his troubled mind.

"\*\*Soâ€¦| who exactly are you introducing me to?"\*\*

Meatlug whined about how unfair they were being to the small Dark One. Stormfly eventually conceded.

"\*\*He likes to be called Forni when meeting guests. 'Claims that the \*\_Skyless Dirt Grubbers\_\*gave 'im that title far longer than any of us were hatched."\*\*

Hiccup became very thoughtful on that new piece of information. The word Forni meant '\_ancient one' \_in the old Norse his parents taught him. It was also noted to have been another name for Woden, or Odin as he was aforementioned. Nevertheless Hiccup felt a great sense of dread over his body. The arrival to their final destination did not soothe him in the moreover. The tunnel opened to reveal a round stone chamber. Its size only rivaled the great hall back in Haddock Castle, though the interior left little to be desired. The walls were bare with no markings or blemishes on the walls. The air was dry and stale adding to the aroma of chicken eggs left out to rot in the sun, only far worse. The odor most certainly would lead to a human becoming unconscious in a matter of minutes. How Hiccup and the rest of the sensitive smelling dragons remained standning was a mystery all on its own. It would come as a later conclusion from Hiccup that dragons could handle harsher scents than a human on the account for living in the underground cave system.

"\*\*Here we are." \*\*Stormfly announced robustly with a flourish of her wings.

"\*\*Someone's overenthusiastic." \*\*Barf said. The Nadder gave the right Zippleback head a glare.

Hiccup scrutinized with narrowed eyes, looking around to see straightaway that-

"\*\*I am afraid I fail to see anyone here." \*\*

Hookfang snorted a puff of smoke through his nostrils. "\*\*That's because he likes to be subtle."\*\*

"\*\*Subtlety has nothing to do with it." \*\*

Hiccup turned to wherever the new voice came from. It was male and sounded distinctive and imposing. The voice resonated across the hollowed room. The rest of the dragons did not react as he did they remained still instead.

"\*\*I prefer a more direct approach when meeting new faces." \*\*

A silhouette draped over the walls. The shadow's form was seen as a long and narrow body, strikingly of a dragon. The shadow moved furtively over to where the other dragons stood. Instinctively Hiccup took a step back, Stormfly prodded him forward. She had confused his hesitation for fumbling.

\_Well, it was nice keeping my secret hidden by this point. \_Hiccup now had to face the inevitability of being discovered. After hearing the voice of the leader he could tell it sounded elderly. Another lesson his father educated him was that elder dragons were far more clever and calculating. It was also said that they held divine powers to look within a person's soul of their choosing. If any of that were true, Hiccup silently decided to remain calm and behave more like a dragon as possible.

And naturally Hiccup was going to fail at masquerading as a true dragon.

\_Exactly as everything else I failed at doing by this point in time. \_he thought miserably.

Over the jagged cracks on the floor to the steaming wisps of hot sulfur, a pair of golden feline eyes surfaced. The eyes were low to the ground as though they belonged to a slithering snake until Hiccup learned why. From the smoke and steam a brown wrinkled creature tottered on very small legs with the slightest implication that it even had claws. The skin was dried up and wings that shared the appearance of crumpled maps from Stoick's old study. The dragon's horns had seen better days with one shorter than the other while the later was ready to split in half. Canines too large for a dragon its size protruded past the jaw line. Despite appearing weak the dragon did not look weary in the least. His eyes were half-lidded and were full of some ancient wisdom that only a few were honored to be bequeath upon. Hiccup wondered if he would be such a lucky soul.

\_Wait his eyesâ€¦|.\_ They were so bright and already he was feeling his head spin.

\_Oh no.\_

"\*\*Well Hiccup, here is our friend we promised you to meet."  
\*\*Stormfly raised a wing with a fulfilled look. She was very glad to make the introduction. Vain Nadders indeed.

"\*\*The wisest and oldest dragon of us all: Wodensfang." \*\*

Hiccup thought wisely to hold back the phlegm and salivation in his throat. This was very problematic. The dragon was very small but misleading. Size did not matter, as it was a deception hiding the rightful power this dragon held. The Book of Dragons warned about how a few species of dragons (the Changewing and Flightmare being prime examples) that were able to look into a victim's mind and know their deepest, more sacred and important secrets. Hiccup had several good reasons why Wodensfang knowing his secrets was a bad idea.

The small dragon on the other hand-claw-did not pay Hiccup much heed



when he instead focused his attention on a certain Stoker class dragon.

"\*\*No slouching, Hookfang, are you trying to intimate a Smoke-breather by crawling lowly to the ground?" \*\*the Wodensfang's voice was not as loud and booming from before. The voice now barely came out of a hiss, the faraway shake from an autumn leaf. It made Hiccup feel melancholy for the trees back home.

"\*\*Yes-I mean no-Wodnesfang." \*\*Hookfang looked very nervous even though he was much larger than the dragon that was commanding him. The sight looked very comical in Hiccup's eye but he decided against to laugh out loud.

"\*\*Now, don't start with that," \*\*the small dragon firmly tapped his foot to the ground, a noise that was less audible than his own voice.\*\* "Once you start showing respect then you can refer to me by my name. It's Forni or sir, for you."\*\*

The Monstrous Nightmare grumbled momentarily. Wodensfang raised an eyebrow at him forcing Hookfang to make out his apology with the proper formalities.

"\*\*He's good, huh?" \*\*Meatlug whispered to Hiccup, who merely nodded.

\_This goes against everything my father taught me.\_ Hiccup thought in amazement. Then again some of the information the Book of Dragons had on the specific reptiles did lean toward implausible after he met the useless reptile that was not going to be mentioned at all.

"\*\*I was going to ask what's the occasion for all of you to visit me but I think I know the reason for it now." \*\*

Aaaaaand~ the attention was placed on Hiccup again. Wonderful.

"\*\*Uhh," \*\*the bi-pedal Night Fury did his finest crawling dragon impersonation, which of course was the least bit realistic, but Thor how he tried to appear as a normal Night Fury.

"\*\*Not much of a talker is he?" \*\*Wodensfang asked dryly.

"\*\*He said his name was Hiccup." \*\*Meatlug said all too eagerly, much to Hiccup's displeasure. Toothless did not look all that pleased either for some reason. Not that Hiccup cared anyway.

"\*\*Interesting." \*\*

"\*\*It's uhh, a family name." \*\*Hiccup admitted inadequately.

"\*\*Very peculiar indeed." \*\*Wodensfang mused. His eyes peered toward the dragon-boy with some hint of fascination. \*\*"Would you please come closer? I want to get a better look of you."\*\*

Hiccup was about to open his mouth to decline when the older Night Fury surprisingly stepped in.

"\*\*I'm not so sure about that one, Wodensfang." \*\*

Hiccup was taken back. Toothless was defending him even after everything that happened between them so far.

"\*\*So he finally speaks." \*\*Barf said.

"\*\*Didn't think you'd be concern over something so trivial."  
\*\*Stormfly observed.

Toothless ignored both of them and continued speaking toward the smallest dragon in their pack.

"\*\*It's not nice to ask other \*\*\_greenbloods \_\*\*personal questions."

><strong>

"\*\*That may be true, Dark One, but I am an old, old dragon so I am inclined to ask my own questions since I'm an Elder. Haven't you heard the phrase 'respect your elders'?"\*\*

"\*\*That awfully sounds a lot like an \*\*\_Skyless Dirt Grubbers \_\*\*saying to me." \*\*Hookfang muttered, ring smokes puffing from his mouth.

Hiccup was uncertain about that supposed human slight when Wodensfang gave the large dragon a stern look.

"\*\*I would very much like to speak with Hiccup and Toothless for a moment. Alone."\*\*

With a regarded caw from Stormfly, two equal snorts from the Zippleback, a reluctant goodbye from Meatlug, and a slight grunt (but a lingering stare) from Hookfang, the five dragons left the Night Furies and the Wodensfang inside the dome.

The small dragon that rivaled the height of a piglet-gods it has been long since Hiccup tasted pork-waited until the faint sound of flapping wings were heard no more. Wodensfang sighed once while looking toward Hiccup and Toothless.

"\*\*I must say it has been a long time since I have seen another like you." \*\*

Hiccup shared a worried glance with Toothless that happened quick enough so Wodensfang hopefully did not notice.

"\*\*You are a very irregular looking Dark One indeed.\*\* \*\*It must be the reason why you wish to return to the outside against your friend's wishesâ€| though it would seem he is more than willing for you to leave now." \*\*

Those golden eyes peered at Hiccup, which made him feel very uncomfortable. He really did not want the dragon to know more than necessary. Thankfully Toothless stepped in again.

"\*\*And there's nothing wrong with being different. Is there?" \*\*His green eyes narrowed dangerously toward the smaller dragon.

Wodensfang expressed a look of meditation for a few moments. A minute

later, he admitted that what Toothless spoke was true but warned,

\*\*\*Not \*\*\_\*\*everyone\*\*\_\*\* will agree with your belief, Toothless. The same goes for you Hiccup. Be wary of who you can trust and those who will merely see you as a pawn. I should know since history has a way of repeating itself, even in the most unexpected ways.\*\*\*

The smaller Night Fury shifted his eyes nervously from that revelation and possible prediction while peering behind his neck once.

\*\*\*So yeah, can we go now?" \*\*Toothless asked rather impatiently.

\*\*\*Toothless!\*\*\*

\*\*\*Now, now that's fine." \*\*the Wodensfang soothed. \*\*\*"You may take your leave whenever you like. Do remember that you're more than welcome to visit again, Hiccup. I found this meeting to be very enjoyable. We will meet again.\*\*\*

It was neither a promise nor a hopeful wish. Hiccup \_had \_to come back to the cave again whether he liked to or not. With a respectful bow from them both, he and Toothless left the room and back to the labyrinth of tunnels at least until they more or less collided with the others. They apparently did not give the three dragons that much privacy.

\*\*\*So, how did it go?" \*\*Stormfly asked politely after she wobbled back into place.

Hiccup repressed the sudden urge to roll his eyes at her. Could he even do that while in his dragon form? \*\*\*"It went," \*\*he trailed off slightly after Toothless glared at him.

\*\*\*Well?" \*\*Hiccup offered while uncurling his wings nervously. He was getting agitated the longer he stayed

Hookfang sniffled at some dying weed growing on the side of a wall. He was looking for scented flowers to eat. When he found none, he sighed in defeat. He gave Hiccup an almost envious look. \*\*\*"I guess you'll be heading out soon?\*\*\*

\*\*\*Uh, yes. I believe so." \*\*

\*\*\*Oh," \*\*Meatlug murmured sadly. \*\*\*"But we didn't get to play 'Toss the Sheep.'\*\*\*

\*\*\*We can play that later." \*\*Stormfly scolded the Gronckle lightly. \*\*\*"You need to find a new one anyway.\*\*\*

\*\*\*But I might visit again." \*\*Hiccup said impulsively. He did not know what on earth provoked him to say that.

Toothless grunted impatiently before giving him a nudge. \*\*\*"We need to leave before the sun rises.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Have fun \*\*\_\*\*looking \*\*\_\*\*at it. Hope it doesn't burn out your eyes." \*\*The Monstrous Nightmare was promptly whacked by the Deadly

Nadder.

"\*\*Hookfang!" \*\*

The two Night Furies bid them farewell and Toothless led him and Hiccup through the tunnels toward the opening. As he was no longer being dragged away and look around from behind, Hiccup could now actually admire some of the sights the mysterious cavern had to offer. The water bellow glowed from patches of algae that one Flightmare harvested rigorously. A few walls shimmered little specs that mimicked the Morning Star in radiance \*\*(1)\*\*.

Nothing would have disturbed this amazing sight if it were not for the neighbors.

They flew for a few minutes in silence with the only sounds coming from cave-dwelling dragons that hissed and growl toward them.

"\*\*Not very popular around here are you?" \*\*Hiccup asked sometime after they passed a Whispering Death eating away from the stone wall only to snap at Toothless' feet for a second. The Night Fury evaded the Boulder class dragon with ease.

"\*\*Theyâ€| aren't fond of me leaving the cave that much." \*\*Toothless replied.

"\*\*Hookfang did not look very pleased about it either. Is it a rule here not to go outside?" \*\*

Toothless glanced at his friend with some form of exhaustion built up from so many years. "\*\*Let's just say you're not the only one that gets a little restless lately.\*\*"

"\*\*You mean no one has left the cave before? But Meatlug-"

"\*\*And the rest of my mates and me are an exception since we're close to Wodensfang, but they can only leave at night when it's safe. It's kind of the reason they all hang out together instead of their own \*\*\_greenblood \_\*\*kind. I don't have anybody else but I spend time with them when I can.\*\*"

Hiccup could not help the swell of guilt flood his mind. He never thought there were others who felt as locked-up as he did. And Toothlessâ€| he had no other Night Furies to be with beside the weak excuse Hiccup was. No wonder Toothless acted snappish at the worst of times. There was a whole world that Hiccup was not aware of and he was only getting to the tip of the iceberg. Wodensfang warned him of hidden dangers and yet the only worry Hiccup had was whether or not the Elder dragon knew of his secret. Something inside him said yes to that query, but another told him that worrying over it would lead to a stricken mind. For now all Hiccup decided to concern over was finding their way back to Haddock Castle. As if on queue he began to see the familiar shape of a four-walled fortress with the recognizable towers and bastilles and other fortifications that were severely dated even back in the nineteenth century. But it was still home, the only home Hiccup ever had. With newfound motivation Hiccup flapped his wings over the air currents and glided with precision.

"\*\*You know if given more practice you might end up being as good as

a flyer like me." \*\*Toothless smiled a toothy grin.

Hiccup mirrored the expression. \*\*"I think I would like that."\*\*

\*\*\*Really?" \*\*

\*\*\*Yes. It is about time I start to learn something about flying if I will be coming back to the cave. I probably have no choice in the matter of going either way."\*\*

Toothless nodded, his eyes filled with condolence. \*\*"I'm sorry about that. Really I am. I wasn't thinking straight-had no idea Woden-"\*\*

Hiccup raised his arm to silence the larger dragon. \*\*"It is all right, my friend. I know why you did it."\*\*

\*\*\*What was with that human at the door anyway?" \*\*Toothless inquired straightaway. \*\*"It almost sounded like it knew you."\*\*

"\_\*\*She\*\*\_" was someone Iâ€| to a degree met the day before."\*\*

\*\*\*Oh, Hiccup."\*\*

\*\*\*Now please do not get irritated with me." \*\*Hiccup said defensively, \*\*"She only came the time before \*\*("Before!?" \*\*cried an anguished Toothless) \*\*to retrieve a lost belonging of hers."\*\*

After a few deep breaths Toothless calmed down enough to ask Hiccup, \*\*"Well if she only came for her lost thing then why did she come back?"\*\*

Hiccup glanced nervously to his side before he and Toothless landed to the ground. They were at the top of Hiccup's tower, the stars twinkling overhead and the ocean lapping aggressively to the east. A storm was coming but it was the last thing on Hiccup's mind at the moment. His thoughts returned toward the girl who was practically a tempest herself \*\*(2)\*\*.

\*\*\*I am not so sure why she returned. A part of me wishes to think she was going to." \*\*he sighed.

\*\*\*But after the little \*\*\_\*\*spectacular act \*\*\_\*\*you pulled earlier I would be amazed if she did trust me after that." \*\*

Hiccup felt the poignant stare from Toothless piercing behind his back. Silence filled the air while he pulled the trapdoor and steadily climbed down back to his room. Toothless joined him but chose to climb down through the balcony. Hiccup disliked how intentionally stabbing his words sounded. The Night Fury was overprotective, but always meant well. He was Hiccup's friend after all.

His only friend.

\_Which if his distrust to humans continues he will remain my soul companion. Terrific.\_Hiccup thought sardonically.

What he wanted from the world was one human friend, was that too much to ask? Even if he did eventually die and went to Valhalla, Heaven, or the next life he simply desired to make a companion that was the other half he was during the day. If he had to wander to find that person he wouldâ€¦ disobey his parents rule. \_Again. \_

A new wave of guilt drowned out the old one. He tried shaking those dark thoughts away in order to hear Toothless.

\*\*\*Look, I have no idea what you do during the day here, and I'm not sure if I want to know all of it.\*\*\*

Hiccup rolled his eyes in amusement.

\*\*\*I do want you to know that I still worry about you, okay? Especially when you're involved with a human.\*\*\*

\*\*\*I think after today Valkyrie will want nothing to do with me after you spirited me away like that.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Ohhhh, so this human has a name now." \*\*

Hiccup rolled his eyes, this time out of exasperation.

\*\*\*Actually I gave her that name.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Hmm, I never thought humans picked their own names or had others do it for them too.\*\*\*

\*\*\*What? No, wait humans name their offspring when they are born into the world.\*\*\*

Toothless furrowed his scaly eyebrows, visibly surprised by this information. Hiccup was a little amazed that he did not tell his friend this piece of information before.

\*\*\*So thenâ€¦ I guess there's probably a few things I don't know about humans after all.\*\*\*

Hiccup feigned a gasp. \*\*\*"You mean Toothless the almighty beast admits a weakness?\*\*\*

\*\*\*I know there's not much about dragons that you truly know about." \*\*Toothless snapped lightly.

Hiccup raised his hands as a gesture to an apology.

\*\*\*How about we make a compromise. I will explain a little more about humans to you and you can teach me a little bit more about dragons. As it turns out most of what I know about them before I met you was wrong.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Well that's not too surprising.\*\*\*

Green eyes bore into green with a soft smile. The two miserable friends were now showing signs of happiness once more. Hiccup picked up a few books from his personal collection and opened them up for Toothless to look at on the ground. For the next few hours he began teaching the bigger Night Fury all that he learned from his own

parents. It was a little tricky recalling the lessons and erythematic he was taught all those years ago. Surely Hiccup would succeed in teaching if his own relatives were able to. And maybe someday he would convince Toothless that not all humans were bad and that he could make a true friend that was human. He had all the time in the world to work on that dream and make it real.

But if anything Wodensfang said before was true history was going to repeat sooner than anyone would have planned.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>I'm not sure why I do this to you guys. XD I wish you all a happy 4th Year Anniversary of \_How to Train Your Dragon\_ premiering. :D I love that movie so much! And I'm sure all of you do too. Celebrate with watching it again today if you haven't already or watch again if you want to. I have no objections to that.

\*\*(1)- \*\*Yes there are crystals embed in the walls of the cave. It's a shame that almost none of the villagers know this cave exists or else they'd be swimming in money.

\*\*(2) â€" \*\*And if that wasn't a shameful plug for \_Foxy's Girl\_'s\_ Chasing Thunderstorms \_then I don't know what life is anymore. XD Seriously though, READ that story it's great.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 12. Secrets

\*\*Q-A: \*\*I'm in such a HTTYD binge with the second movie I had just seen (BEST. ANIMATED. SEQUEL. EVER!). :D Thanks for all the love for the last chapter. I didn't realize so many people loved my work this much. I need to get back to my RotG story as well. XP Maybe if there was a tv series or a sequel I would be more motivated.

This chapter was inspired by \_One Republic's Secrets\_. A pretty great song from the good old days. It's strange that I've seen a few AMV's of HTTYD with that songâ€| maybe it had something to do with \_The Sorcerer's Apprentice\_ but then again I don't see \_The Croods\_ \_being\_ mashed up with Secrets eitherâ€| A cookie will be distributed to anyone who gets the reference I just did.

\*\*Disclaimer: \*\*Nothing is mine so don't sue me DW. I don't have enough cash for your products anyways. :(

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Secrets<strong>

August 30, 2010 (morning; Berkenshire Secondary School)~

Astrid lied. She didn't go straight to Haddock Castle. Mother Nature had other ideas in mind like making the biggest rainstorm the town had seen in the lastâ€| week. Winter winds and hail may have been common, but rain was forever. It's what made the crops grow and the grass green all the while leaving a damp smell in the air that clung to a person's skin like sweat. Fate clearly had a wicked sense of

humor and decided to be especially sadistic toward Astrid. She was not pleased with her lack of success at the moment and had become very irritated that the confrontation with a homeless boy did not go to all the way she expected.

So how in God's name was she going to break ties with Hermit now?

There was a strange bitter taste in Astrid's mouth from that thought. It was obviously from remembering him again. The worst part of it all was that this little issue had become a parasite in her mind. No matter how many times she began to think about her lessons, how to get accepted into Moray, or the next ideal season for Bashyball her thoughts always somehow wandered back toward Hermit. Why did his sudden departure bother her so much? She always preferred boys leaving her alone to their consistent urges to winch and yet there was a boy who she barely knew for a week that wouldn't get out of her head.

"Oi, Astrid," a familiar voice hissed low enough for only her to hear.

"What?" she countered with the same tone after pushing away the unwanted thoughts.

"Somebody wants to see yoo." Ruffnut pointed out toward the front of their classroom.

Astrid inwardly scowled for being oblivious to the sights and sounds around her before looking to where her friend was motioning. In less than a second, the blonde immediately recognized the 'somebody.'

The headmaster of the school, Hackett Savage, stood between the doorframe of the chemistry laboratory. His face held some form of subtlety that Astrid wondered how anyone trusted the ostensibly crooked-looking man **\*\*(1)\*\***.

"Miss Hofferson." Savage gave the girl in question an inquiring gaze.

Astrid felt her throat getting dry but answered, "Yes?"

"I would appreciate for yoo to walk with me back to mah office. There are a few things that I need to discuss with yoo privately."

A small noticeable murmur grew within the classroom despite the teacher's hushed tones to settle them down. Astrid kept her breathing low as she reluctantly stood up. Ruffnut made sure to whisper how nice it had been knowing her. Astrid rightfully gave the female Thorston twin a death glare briefly.

She placed her belongings inside her rucksack and followed the principal. Every part of her fiber insisted of running away as far as possible until her hardwired stubbornness spoke of how ridiculous she was sounding. That all lasted until her unyielding logic began to set in.

Was she going to be interrogated as the headmaster and mayor declared a week ago?



If so why was she picked so early?

She kept her head low enough hadn't she?

The Hofferson name wasn't exactly at the beginning of the alphabet and even if the school only had over three hundred students (not counting \_Primary \_since its building was technically on a separate campus). There was a sense of dread bubbling inside her.

\* \* \*

><p>The walk down through the hallways couldn't possibly be any slower from Astrid's viewpoint. Every step she took felt like lead in her trainers and bricks in her pack. In a short week, she started out as an innocent civilian to some criminal, the fact that her Viking ancestors were called Hairy Hooligans notwithstanding. She didn't understand how she may have slipped up so quickly at least until a new unwanted thought appeared in her mind.<p>

Could someone have found out about her secret meetings with Hermit?

One of the constables might have seen her after all since none of her friends knew about her encounter with a homeless boy if not then it could be **\*\*him\*\***! Oh yes, Astrid started to see it now, that clumsy oaf probably got spotted by the constables instead of her. Then that spineless beanpole had to have ratted her out to save his skin. It would explain why he was so nervous from the last time he saw her, he'd betrayed her from the beginning! None of this was her fault since the backstabbing, rat-eating, troll offspring was clearly the blame for all of this! And it had to have been the reason why she made that damned comparison of his green eyes with those more mysterious-

Her thoughts were once again taken away after Savage opened the door to his office. The room was spacious but cluttered from overfilled filing cabinets and papers stacked high over the desk. A window behind the desk showed the rain-soaked Bashyball field, making it all the more painfully obvious to Astrid of what she and her mates were denied.

"Please," Principal Savage motioned Astrid to a plastic chair in front of the mahogany desk. As much as she wished to stand tall the student reluctantly sat opposite of her teacher.

"Yer file says here that yoo're a Fourth Year student Miss Hofferson."

Without missing a beat Astrid answered, "Yes sir, I am."

"So then nothing is different to yoo here isn't it? Going through the same hoops as it were."

Astrid nodded though she was uncertain of where he was getting at.

She knew better than whatever the Headmaster and mayor were masking this whole charade. Before any of this Astrid didn't care much about anything that went on in the village just as long that it had no direct affect on her. She would be leaving the cold place in a few

years.

"Most people would try to shake things up for a change of pace." Savage concluded with a glint in his eye.

Astrid sensed he knew something was up.

\_Easy now, I won't slip up this quickly,\_ the blonde chastised herself.

\_Only somebody like Fishlegs would cave in this fast. I have to keep my resolve.\_

"I understand that many children these days prefer to be rebellious, ah but o'course that's what most of them like to do these days. Yer classmates would be prime examples, eh?"

It took nearly a second before Astrid felt her heart skip a beat. He wasn't seriously suggesting-No. She needed to stay calm. If she learned anything from those old detective noir films was the supposed culprit had to always stick with his or her story and never backtrack. That's when people mess over their own lies and get into trouble. She reminded herself that she would if she blabbered like an \_heid-the-baw\_\*\*(2)\*\*.

Her silent mediation wasn't stirring well with the headmaster as it seemed. He narrowed his eyes and then opened his mouth-

BUZZzzzz!

-only to be interrupted by the timely intercom on the desk. The sound startled Savage momentarily before recomposing himself and cleared his throat. Astrid bit back a smile as her regular heartbeat came back in order.

"Headmaster, there's a commotion going down in South Hall," the levelheaded voice of the secretary from the main office described. "Pro. Mildew wishes to send the Thorston twins over to yer office. He claims they were attempting to make another stink bomb. \_Again\_."

Astrid couldn't hold back the smirk forming on her face and instead settled with masking it as a cough.

While sighing Savage rubbed his left temple, answering the intercom.

"Yes Mrs. Ack, I'll look into it at once." he turned his attention back toward Astrid, her amused grin fading away in an instant. "We'll have to reschedule another time, I have a sudden appointment to make. I shall walk yoo back to class."

"Yes sir." Astrid got up after the headmaster followed suit and headed for the door. She minded herself as she heard her principal muttering under his breath about having to deal with delinquents this early in the morning.

Astrid did not hide her smile during the rest of the walk back to class.

\* \* \*

><p>"So do I need tah even ask what yoo and yer brother were doing while I was gone?"<p>

"Ahhh, Tuff' got bored with Mildew's lecturing and I was starting to doze off when he-Tuffnut, not Mildew-came with the clever idea to just dump all our test tubes into the beaker aaaaaaaaaand some green gas was spewing out, and it smelt more foul than 'Lout's socks after practice."

Astrid wrinkled her nose in disgust. She looked down at her fish-egg chowder with her previous appetite for it fading fast. She shoved it halfheartedly across the table soon after. With the rain pounding hard outside showing no signs of stopping, lunch was indoors in the whitewashed walls in the insipid canteen. The rest of their group sat near the other end of the table, engulfed on their own little worlds.

"That bad huh?"

"Yep. Yoo missed out on the most perfect non-boring moment we'll ever witness at this place." Ruffnut declared in an almost bloated fashion with a cheery grin plastered on her face \*(3)\*. A few students passing by stared at the fourth year oddly before walking away.

"So nothing's changed then?"

"I guess so."

They both drew into a comfortable silence and Astrid's appetite slowly coming back. The moment was laid forgotten as Astrid noted her friend formed a look. The same smug expression she always held whenever besting someone (namely Tuffnut) in some competition. Or about to in this case.

Astrid had a good-or bad depending on the viewpoint, feeling of what Ruffnut wanted to ask.

"All right so, what really happened back when yoo were in the castle?"

If Astrid was still eating her chowder, she would've choked on it. Ruffnut promptly smirked at the actual reaction and started counting off the former's misdemeanors.

"First yoo blew me off after the failed bashyball rescue attempt, then yoo jus' find the ball all well and dandy the next day giving only the clue of that little note yoo got with telling me nothing else. Yoo go back a second time but still tell me nothing and THEN yoo borrow that dragon book the next day with the worst excuse I have ever heard in a long time. Nobody else has dropped the subject, but that's because they don't have my invested nature."

"Yer invested nature?" Astrid stared, incredulous.

"...Fine, Heather may have asked a few questions with me-"

Were those two conspiring against her now?

"-and we were both bothered by yer change of behavior."

\_Damn.\_ This was the exact reason she rarely spent time with the female Thorston twin alone. Out of the twins, Ruff' did the most prying. She took enjoyment in exploiting any secrets she could get her hands on along with the poor souls who carried them. In any other pinch Astrid could avoid the discussion by means of distraction, preferably a punch in the face. Though that probably would not be the best plan of action. Another sad note on Ruffnut was that she one of the two other people who fought back in an instant without restraint, Camicazi being the other, obviously. Of course, a fight was the last thing Astrid wanted to initiate at school. A revisit to the principal's office was another thing she did not wish to do.

Having no other option Astrid resigned herself to defeat. A great shame upon the Hofferson name to say the least.

She stood up from the table, temporally gaining the occupants' attention and motioned Ruff' to follow all the while being inconspicuous toward the others.

Ruffnut blinked in bewilderment but remained composed. Wordlessly she followed her away from the tables leaving the hall into an empty corridor by a stairwell. Astrid propped herself on a step, her eyes staring intently to the ground. From a brief glance, she could see her friend already starting to look bored and confused by the change of scenery.

Astrid decided to get over with it. She wasn't a timewaster after all.

"What happened-I can only tell if yoo promise not to breathe a word of this to anyone."

Ruffnut blinked again; the first sign of whenever she became surprised. This was the first for Astrid to be so secretive; she was never afraid to get stuff out of the open before, until after the incident at Castle Haddock took place. The very thing that got her and Heather talking together in the first place. It did seem odd how strange Astrid had been acting lately since she went inside that so-called haunted castle.

"Heather can't know about this either." Astrid had a feeling the dark haired girl would tell the proper authorities about the situation far too early.

"Not even Tuff'?"

"Especially him."

Astrid waited silently, waiting for Ruff's answer. She immediately nodded her head, confirming her promise.

"The first time I went inside the castle I had this feeling someone was following me."

"Yoo mean that 'castle caretaker' bloke yoo went on about?"

Astrid rolled her eyes. She wasn't talking about Hermit \_that\_ often.

"It wasn't him, or at least I didn't think so untilâ€¦"

"Until what?"

She sighed once before continuing. She told Ruffnut of what she'd seen during her first visit inside the castle. The Thorston girl listened with intent though occasionally interjecting a few times for clarification. Astrid spoke of how the torches on the hallway seemingly ignited and lead her directly to the front door. She recalled in vivid detail of the green animalistic eyes that stared down at her, but leaving out her suspicions of them relating to Hermit. Or bringing up her eventual conversation with Hermit altogether sounded like a good plan.

"So I knew something was up when I saw the limbless dragon crest on the book. It was exactly like the wax stamp on the letter. Either it was a **\*\*very \*\*exact** coincidence or the caretaker was in on it the whole time. So when we were done with collecting our books I went back to the castle and ask He-the caretaker and was ready to demand what was going on, and he just left me there as if I were a gutted fish, rotting in the sun. I mean what's with that?"

Ruffnut did her best to look interested in Astrid theory-mongering but had become jaded since the latter talked about the second visit to the castle.

Ultimately she decided to ask her the real question that was beginning to stab at the back of her mind like a great chib **\*\*(4)\*\***.

"Okay so to sum it all up yoo basically found yerself dumped," Ruffnut concluded, a proud smirk broadened her features. And the expression Astrid gave her only lengthened it.

"What? Yoo think me-oh no. It wasn't like-" Astrid waved her hands, rebuffing her friend's words.

"It was \_exactly \_like that."

"No it wasn't."

"Sure it isn't. Just how many boys here 'ave tried to get with yoo fer ages with no success and yet this random bloke somehow gained yer attention?"

"That's not even close," Astrid swore she heard herself stammer, "what yer saying is ridiculous, I'd never go through so many lengths just fer one boy."

"Oh, so it is a boy?" Ruffnut grilled with her eyes shimmering mischievously. "And here I was thinking yoo'd have a thing fer older men."

\_Dammit to hell! \_

"Yoo can't tell anyone about this." Astrid nearly screeched.

"Aww, yoo'd think I would do something like that?" Ruffnut feigned innocence. "But I'm sure Cami or Heather-"

"\_Nobody\_ must know about this." Astrid insisted, waving a warning finger. "He's just some kid living alone. The only reason he bothered me was because I went in that stupid castle he was occupying. Once I tell him to bugger off it'll be the end of it. Which means neither of us has to bring this up to the rest of the gang, right?"

Ruffnut pouted but consented. "Alright, fine I won't say. Snotlout would probably jus' go after the poor boy if he found out."

Astrid rolled her eyes before standing up. "I don't even want to think about him right now."

Ruffnut agreed, following Astrid back to the lunch hall before adding,

"Yoo know, I never though yoo'd get a stalker until we hit university."

Astrid shoved her playfully but said nothing else.

\* \* \*

><p>The remainder of the school day pressed on with being uneventful. Despite the chemistry professor's claims the Thorston twins remained scot-free with little to no proof and no valid witnesses despite the claims otherwise. The only trouble herself was in ending up turning into a firm talk with Gobber. He wasn't too thrilled that her journal had not been fully written out as he instructed on the previous week.<p>

"Fer someone that takes Bashyball and her other projects with stolid determination I'm a bit surprised by yer take on the lesson here." the English professor sighed, rubbing his temple with his good arm. "The 'hole point was to write a windoh intoh yer day-toh-day life and reflect over those as lessons."

"Where didjou get that nonsense from, a standardized textbook?"

Gobber scratched his chin, embarrassed. "Partially, what I'm tryin' toh say is that yoo need tah figure out somethin' more toh write about than simply an activity yoo did."

"I'm a little stressed out lately if that wasn't obvious enough. That's all I can think about when I sit down and write." Astrid didn't mean to snap at Gobber, but he was starting to get on her nerves. She was completely aware of how her grades in English class were thank-you very much. She needed a consistent stream of A's in finals if she wanted any colleges to even think about signing her up for a scholarship. It was that beanpole's entire fault for ruining her concentration if anything.

"Fine, lass. I understand the whole debacle that yoo youngsters call 'puberty' but why don't yoo try to make somethin' out of it? As in write about how the things around yoo make yoo feel instead of just listing them. Yer first entry shows a \_hint \_of that at least."

Astrid bit her lip. "Yoo read that one too huh?"

"'Gammy project' wasn't that one of yer exact words?" Gobber supplied in mild amusement.

She sighed, burying her face into her hands.

He placed a comforting hand on her shoulder and said, "Things around 'ere have been looking rough, but I'm sure once the headmaster and mayor find out those ruffians were it'll all cool down."

Astrid's head was bowed down, conveniently hiding her guilty expression.

"Yeah, that might calm me down a bit more."

\_Damn, why would I say somethin' like that in front of an adult?\_

Gobber raised a brow but remained silent. He spoke again telling her she was allowed to go home since their little after school session was finished.

Astrid walked through the still pouring rain in a mood that matched the weather. Thankfully it wasn't too windy like before, leaving only her windcheater and boots to be exposed to the precipitation. The walk back home did not feel as long as it did in the morning, and she made it home in time for dinner. Erick Hofferson was placing a large plate of steaming fish mixed with rice, eggs, parsley, and a generous amount of butter on the table right when his daughter walked through the threshold, entering the house.

Astrid sniffed the air when she reached the kitchen. "What smells so good?"

"\_Kedgereee," \_Erick answered. "'Figured we both need something to warm our bones from this storm."

"Good observation." Astrid said, helping set up the table after putting her rucksack and coat away. Their argument from the previous night had all but evaporated. Both of them still needed to patch things up, and it would take time to heal the old wounds. That was the best part being a Hofferson; they never backed down from a challenge.

"Did yoo have an good day at school?"

For a moment Astrid stiffened slightly but brushed off the feeling, speaking coolly, "Uh, there had been some of us having to deal with some stuff from his 'Lordness', nothing much to report."

His\_ Lordness \_was the not so affectionate nickname the Hoffersons dubbed their mayor. Even with half of the town hailing him as a heroic defender, there were still a few that felt trusting SkÃ¶ll should not be in their best interests. "I heard that the mayor wanted to speak with some of the students at the school. Something about vandals snooping around the old castle?"

"Yeah well, mah mates weren't a part of that and as for meeting with

the authorities it's nothing we can't handle." When her father gave her a pointed look she quickly added, "And I will make sure to stay out of trouble since I \_haven't\_." Part of that held some truth. Her friends \_didn't\_ infiltrate the castle with her, and so far she didn't get into that kind of trouble unless she was caught.

"Just as long no one lands yoo in any danger either. I'm not at all judging yer friends but kids yoo might not know too well might not be the kind of people I'd want yoo spending yer time with."

Astrid furrowed her brows in confusion. How on earth did her father learn about-

"Ruffnut said yoo might be having some trouble due to some boy bothering yoo." Erick furthered explained while joining his daughter at the kitchen table. "Is that right?" he titled his head in fatherly concern, very much unaware of the fuming Astrid before him.

\_Ruffnut I am so going to kill yoo.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Don't worry no children are going to murder other children in this fic. That would be sick and wrong on so many levels. Now if it was a kid killing an adult that deserved it that might get justified (Kids don't go killing people you think wronged you unless they really are badâ€¦ XD).

Yeah so when I promised to update after school ended I didn't realize how lazy I'd get in between then and later release of HTTYD2 getting me distracted. I promise to do a lot better and will be updating faster. Blame this very site with having so many fun stories to read, seriously it's like you guys are trying to make me lose focus. Anyway thanks for giving me almost 90 reviews. It's only 88 but still. So in the next chapter we'll see Hiccup and Toothless again with more witty banter from them AND the re-introduction of someone else. I won't spoil who only that it'll lead to some more funny moments.

\*\*(1)\*\*-\*\* Hackett\*\* happens to be Norse for a person with a hooked nose, which I thought suited my version of Savage quite nicely.  
XDD

\*\*(2)\*\*- Scottish term meaning idiot.

\*\*(3)\*\*- A term to describe someone being very, very drunk. XDDD  
Sometimes I think the twins are drunk off their asses in the show and movie 'cause they couldn't possibly found a way to make pot out of dragon nip yet. XDDDD Unless they were sick from eel pox but we'll never get to see that.

\*\*(4)\*\*- Another word for knife or 'to chib someone' like stabbing.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

### 13. In My Life

\*\*Q-A: \*\*I was afraid that so many of you hated me for taking so



long. XD I wish I could say I won't be making that mistake again but THAT would be a lie. If that makes any senseâ€¦? Moving on, we're now with Hiccup again and see how he's been doing since his return back home and he'll have an unexpected guest in the most unreasonable way. Just a warning there's going to be some slight angst again even if our hero doesn't know what that means. And there will be some bromance, I REPEAT bromance on the port bow! XDDD I'm so weird.

Today's chapter is inspired by the \_Beatles' In My Life\_ because if that doesn't scream family, love and bromance I don't know what does. And my other excuse is Beatles. If you ever want to win an argument (at least with my family X3) just say the Beatles and the argument is instantly invalid.

Enough stalling let's get to it.

**\*\*Response to reviews:\*\***

**\*\*Iamanalsomedemigod\*\*\*\*:** **\*\*Thanks to your kind words, yeah the story does start off slow but it will get good soon. I hope to hear more from you in the future.**

**\*\*Disclaimer:** **\*\*Nothing is mine, even the Beatles.**

\* \* \*

><p><strong>In My Life<strong>

August 30, 2010 (1 hour before sunset)~

In all the blessings Hiccup had in life nothing was more apparent than the friendship he shared with Toothless.

**\*\*You can't honestly be serious about this.\*\***

**\*\*Yes I am, I made up my mind about it.\*\***

**\*\*Right and then a day from now you \*\*\_\*\*won't \*\*\_\*\*be changing your mind.\*\***

**\*\*I made up my mind for real this time. I'm staying.\*\***

Even if that friendship involved being with one of the most stubborn reptiles in the known world. Toothless had it in his mindset to gravitate toward Hiccup in the most unusual of ways. Hiccup initially thought the Night Fury was simply adjusting from being underground for more than a day, but in the past week he began to spend more time in the castle than anywhere else. It baffled Hiccup as to why Toothless chose to stay in a man-made fortification when he had declined the offer dozen of times before. Hiccup tried asking his friend if there was something wrong. Hiccup even brought up the dragon lessons Toothless promised to show the boy in an effort to appease his friend in a better mood. Neither of those tactics worked.

The weather did little to improve the dragon's mood with rain continuing to beat over the aged castle rock and thunder and lightning occasionally resonated above in a blustorous symphony.

"Oh, this storm," Hiccup gripped in English momentarily, disgruntled by the leak from a ceiling. Hiccup decided to temporarily drop the subject (and the dragon-speaking tongue) between him and Toothless in order to repair the damaged area. He had assisted his father plenty of times with mending the roof, which they, of course, did so underneath the rafters not to draw unwanted attention. It led to some haphazard results in the process but there was enough wood and stone in their disposal. He went over to the nearest undercroft where supplies for stonemasons were kept. Inside square stones stacked atop another. Buckets of sand, gravel, and just a hint of mortar were held miscellaneously together. All Hiccup needed was water to coat the newly formed crack with a knife to spread. Along with another much needed tool.

"\*\*What are you doing?" \*\*Toothless asked, snuffling the bucket Hiccup partially dragged with both hands on the handle. The boy's weight staggered against the heavy rock fragments as the knuckles began to turn white on his hands. Small beads of perspiration gathered around his brow but he showed no signs of slowing down while completely disregarded his well being at the moment. He needed to seal that hole before it could further damage the roof and floor.

"\*\*I'm going to use this\*\*-\*\*" \*\*gasping while trying desperately to prevent the floor from becoming scrapped. \*\*"this to mend the crack in the ceiling."\*\*

"\*\*In that big, long room we were just in."\*\*

Hiccup sighed, from his weakened state and out of amusement to the full Night Fury's choice of words. Did he not learn anything from the lessons Hiccup so kindly taught him in much less than a fortnight?

"\*\*It's called a\*\*-hallway-\*\*friend, and it leads to my room so I would not like to have a wet floor by morning. Less noise would also be appreciated."\*\*

He acquired a ladder from the stone room that would effectively be tall enough to reach the ceiling. It was one of his designs he came up with on a mere whim; a ladder that collapsed and expanded in a similar manner as a telescope. After much trial and error (read \*\*error\*\*) he was proud to announce his handy device to the world, and at that time the closest to that was Toothless, who did not share the same enthusiasm.

"\*\*What noise?"\*\*

"\*\*From outside." \*\*said Hiccup.

To further prove his claim the rain from above clashed with thunder rumbling as light flashed through the windows momentarily.

Toothless' body shuddered while emitting a low growl.

"\*\*I now understand your motivation."\*\*

Hiccup curled his lip upward, suggesting a smile. \*\*"It has nothing

to do with me. I am more worried about your well being, Toothless. You tend to get uncomfortable with lightning." \*\*He laid the ladder over the wall, pressing each step forward with an added nail to keep each new extension in place. Those little segments would have broken if pressured by heavier weight but with Hiccup's physique being the way it was he had no trouble with the ladder. It was a practical device to use when he couldn't fly until sundown. Still, Hiccup would have rather used the newer ladder he had made with the pulley system and pawls attached but he left in the great hall instead of the old prototype he was handling now. Alas, that location was at another part of the castle.

\*\*\*I'm not afraid of lightning," \*\*Toothless snapped toward the human, not showing signs of worry since he had seen Hiccup attempting this stunt many times ago. He did appear frigid at the mentioning of lightning. He tried to hide his concern with a blatant excuse.

\*\*\*You said it yourself that flying in a thunderstorm is a bad idea."\*\*

Hiccup rolled his eyes, not bothering to look down while climbing up. \*\*"Stormfly does it all the time." \*\*he countered, sighing in relief after finally reaching the top.

\*\*\*Yeah well, Stormfly has a death wish," \*\*said Toothless bluntly. He honestly did not want the other dragons brought up.\*\* "She's the kind of female that'll do something crazy if someone else hasn't done it already. She just wants to get attention out of it."\*\*

\_Vain Nadders indeed. \_Hiccup thought in amusement. He paused momentarily when he remembered to have thought of that idiom back in the caves. The caves that were very same home of the very same dragons that he swore to meet again someday.

A frown found its way into his face until he brushed the uneasy thought away and started to climb the rafter and eventually reach the blemish gap scarring above him and making his hair very damp. The water from the rain did help with mixing the cement in place, as did the trowel that had hung from his belt smooth out unwanted lumps. Unfortunately for him the rain continued pouring with no change. At this rate, the cement would never dry out quick enough.

\*\*\*Say Toothless," \*\*he called out to his friend from below. The Night Fury had already acted as sentry and watched over Hiccup since he started his climb, so he was on full alert when the later spoke.

\*\*\*I might need a little help up here if you could-" \*\*Toothless wasted no time and immediately flew up to the rafter, albeit with a clumsy landing causing Hiccup to hold back a chuckle.

\*\*\*So what do ya need?" \*\*asked Toothless, ready to assist.

Hiccup pointed to the dripping mess that was the not-so drying cement and asked, \*\*"If you would be so kind and use a small amount of your fire to warm up this spot that would be very appreciated."\*\*

Toothless eyed his friend curiously but assented with the request.

Cautiously Toothless widened his jaw enough for the internal fires from within to emit hot steam over the wet surface. Cement converted into concrete in a matter of minutes, as the outside elements no longer felt like a nuisance with the warm air heating over the duo. The thunder would rear its head once in a while, but a comforting hand from Hiccup kept Toothless' mind calm and he remained steady over his task.

"\*\*I think you are just about done," \*\*Hiccup peered over the newly refurbished ceiling and placed a delicate hand over the cooling stone. His smile grew in triumph when finalizing that the concrete was intact.

"\*\*Sometimes it pays to be a \*\*\_greenblood\_\*\* huh?" \*\*Toothless offered with a tooth free grin.

Hiccup turned toward his good friend with the same smile from before. "\*\*Yes it does my friend. Yes it does." \*\*He placed his tool back and carrying the bucket with one hand he used the free one to climb safely back to the ground.

"\*\*I don't see why you don't just slid down on that thing." \*\*Toothless pointed out before jumping off the wooden beam, gliding to a descent. "\*\*You do it almost all the time with the wood stick above those steps."\*\*

"\*\*That's called a\*\*-banister-\*\*and usually when I do that I'm not carrying \*\*\_\*\*heavy objects\*\*\_\*\* with me in my arms." \*\*

"\*\*'Usually'?" \*\*Toothless arched a scaly eyebrow with eyes shining with curiosity. "\*\*Oh, tell me when has the 'Great Blunder' done when I'm not present?"\*\*

Hiccup groaned, silently wishing he had not uttered such an embarrassing secret.

\* \* \*

><p>Despite having to deal with a dragon's mirth for a few more hours, Hiccup finally found peace and quiet after a long day to sleep in his bedchamber in the drum tower. Sleeping in his dragon form had never been much of a problem so as long he slept on his stomach. His wings and tail would not fall asleep, and his mattress remained safe from the protruding spine spikes. A woolen quilt extended far enough covering Hiccup's body from his curled tail to the part where his neck met up with the auburn hair that remained on his head. He breathed small puffs of through his nostril slits, inhaling the musty, but familiar scent of the room with a small smile tugging at his features.<p>

In his dreams, he found himself as a boy again running to his parents joining them in a warm embrace. He felt his father's wiry beard smothering half of his face while the infectious laughter of his mother musically filled the air around them, and in the first time in his life Hiccup could see the stars twinkling outside of the castle. He was not a cursed immortal boy and was more importantly \*\*free\*\*. The distant melody from a forgotten night drifted around Hiccup and his family, bringing forth the sweetest sounds.

"AHROOO!"

As quick the dream came so did it fade from Hiccup's vision. He awoke to the sound what appeared to be a large wail in despair. Disoriented and drowsy Hiccup wiped away the sleep from his eyes and pushed himself up in a sitting position. He looked to the ground and saw his friend cry and shuddered unconsciously. In an instant, Hiccup rushed to the larger Night Fury's side stroking his scales.

"\*\*Wake up, my friend. Do not let the dark dream trouble you."

\*\*Hiccup spoke in a soothing voice that gradually drew Toothless from slumber. Green feline eyes blinked slowly with breathing returned to a normal rhythm.

"\*\*Sorry. Didn't mean to disturb you."\*\*

Hiccup feigned ignorance with an eye-roll and lied weakly, "\*\*Hardly. I was not all that awake."\*\*

"\*\*Hiccupâ€¦" \*\*Toothless was no one's fool.

Hiccup smiled sheepishly, averting his gaze from the insightful Night Fury.\*\* "All right, I was more or less asleep when you alerted me."  
\*\*

"\*\*The storm is a bitâ€¦. Nerve-racking." \*\*Thunder boomed from overhead. Thor was angry about some ordeal beyond Hiccup and Toothless whimpered with his head close to the ground.

"\*\*The lightning won't hurt you, friend. It's not coming anywhere near here." \*\*Hiccup tried reassuring the older dragon. While his fingers had been pushed back to near inexistence his claws acted as digits and gently brushed over Toothless' head to coax him into a calmer state. Thor almighty did not have any desire to cooperate as he continued barraging lightning bolts across the sea, sending thunderous shock waves in the sky.

Toothless continued his keening leaving Hiccup to sigh. A thought came to him moments later with his perpetuate frown fading away.

"\*\*How does a\*\*-lullaby-\*\*sound to you?"\*\*

Toothless quit sniveling (\*\*"DRAGONS DON'T SNIVEL!" \*\*the dragon would roar to anyone that would dare say otherwise) long enough to stare at Hiccup in slight interest.

"\*\*A lull-what?" \*\*

"\*\*A\*\*-lullaby\*\*." \*\*Hiccup corrected with his instincts as a guide slowly kicked in. "\*\*It's a song that is supposed to soothe children when they get scared. My mother did the same thing for me when I young."\*\*

"\*\*What's a song?"\*\*

Hiccup opened his mouth and then paused for a moment. How was he to define something as common as singing to a dragon? Better yet, how couldn he define the very word? Songs were conducted in a musical motif, but dragons did not know the same music as humans, or if any

music at all. What he knew about came from the few times he heard his parents sang to either him or each other. Their voices always made Hiccup's heart swell. They gave him emotions limited to words that weren't spoken, but only in song. They were the words to describe the desire to be free, to fl-

The answer dawned on Hiccup. His meditative expression became one of epiphany

\*\*\*A song is like€|. The feeling you have when you fly.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Like you're happy?" \*\*Toothless' eyes rounded in familiarity. Suddenly he was starting to feel some relation toward this human custom known as song-ing. Not that he would reveal this side of him to anyone. Namely Hiccup

\*\*\*Yes, whenever a person sings a great wave hits them and their selected audience with awe\*\*. \*\*It carries the taste of\*\*-\_saltswimmys\_\*\*-\*\*when eating them for the first or sound of\*\*-\_warmadi-tootsies\_\*\*-\*\*make from your breath.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Now you're just making me hungry." \*\*Toothless whined before smacking Hiccup's back with his tail. He glared playfully toward the reclining dragon when another clamor of thunder groaned from above. Toothless shifted uncomfortably but remained silent this time.

\*\*\*I should give you a warning, I haven't used my voice for something like this in a long time." \*\*

Hiccup couldn't even remember when he sang to anyone. Hopefully, he inherited some musical talent from his parents, as they were both fairly good if not great. He cleared his throat for what might have been half a dozen times before it felt level enough to sing a tune. He wasn't sure how long he went, but the dragon-turned-boy recited from memory the lyrics of every little note. With Toothless hanging on to each word, he began to pay less and less attention to the storm. His round eyes drooped, and his breathing became softer, more relaxed. Hiccup did not stop the lullaby long after Toothless had returned to slumber as the prince carried on until he too closed his eyes for the last time that evening.

\* \* \*

><p>August 31, 2010 (early morning)~<p>

The break of dawn came with the glorious sun having bested the storm at long last. Light peaked through the window with one ray edging over to the Night Fury. He grumbled in irritation as his eyelids opened in slits. He started to shift when a slight pressure on his back soon made its presence. The black reptile carefully tilts his head in order to see the added weight and then soften at seeing who it was.

Hiccup had a part of his mouth open with human slobber dripping toward his naked arm. His arms rested comfortably over the right side of Toothless' back and his head leaning on one of the spine fins. In spite of his untidy hair and unconventional sleeping position, the boy looked content sleeping soundly while holding a slight smile in his peaceful state. The Night Fury gave his friend a meaningful look and promised to affectionately nose nudge him later. Toothless smiled

and lowered his jaw back to the ground.

He could wake Hiccup later.

(As it turned out later became past noon, and Hiccup went ballistic for not getting any of his morning chores done.)

\* \* \*

><p>For the entirety of the day Hiccup tediously assumed his duties with making repairs for any other damages the storm had made since the last week. Other rooms beside the hallway had flooded courtesy from the gaping holes in the ceiling. Tapestries needed patching or set outside in order to dry. The stained glass windows needed careful scrapping from the dirt that somehow flew in the air and landed on there, hardening from the sun. Most of the courtyard turned muddy and almost impossible to walk over, meaning he had to go around the area which took even more time for him to get the chores done. Floors, walls, staircases, suits of armor, and so much needed to be cleaned before the end of the day, otherwise he would have lots more to do the next day along with the regular chores.<p>

\_At least Toothless helped with me earlier, \_Hiccup thought with gratefulness.

Sadly, that was the only time the lounging lizard contributed to the clean up and went straight back to napping on the east facing battlement where he got the most sun. Without the Night Fury's help, Hiccup went with the minimal tasks that required less strain on his fishbone arms. Such as listing the stockpile of remaining foods stored in the kitchen. It was his least favorite task on the account that he barely ate, and there was hardly any vermin or disease found. It helped that he could take the form of a monstrous dragon at night to scare all the vermin away, and his could use his fire to scorch the walls from bacteria once in a while. Still, he left polishing the chain mail in the foyer to leave for the kitchen, sighing exasperatedly for walking with dirtied boots. He had only scrubbed the floors an hour ago!

Hiccup tried thinking of something less cynical as he hobbled along to his destination.

The inside of the kitchen was large. Not quite spacious as the Great Hall around the corner but certainly grand from the old age when the castle had once been a home to Viking kings (and the monks that were evicted beforehand). Giant stone sinks used to clean pans; kettles, plates and goblets stood beside the wall where faucets connected to the well raised above them. Two iron cauldrons bigger than Hiccup's wooden bathtub were held opposite with extinguished fire pits laid underneath. The walls were adorned with the drying herbs Hiccup personally collected since spring that he hoped to use in soups for the harsh cold winter soon approaching. On high shelves that Hiccup needed a stool to reach housed a modest set of utensils with knives, forks, and spoons that securely wrapped from cloths chosen as napkins and handkerchiefs. The shelves had once held bread until the flour supply became spent a century before. The last part of the kitchen that carried Hiccup's full attention was the smokehouse, or the smoker as Hiccup preferred to call it that. The reasoning he held was that its smoky scent reminded him of a dragon. The smoker was once its own little hut beside the castle until one of Hiccup's ancestors,

Hamish the Fourth, decided to turn it adjacent to the building, as he preferred having the smell of pork wafting through the room whenever he visited. It happened to be one of the many unsolved theories possibly liking to why the old mayor of Berkenshire held such a name even if he was the fourth generation to have that title. It was another chapter in Hiccup's extensive family tree that would very unlikely not be explored further.

The inside of the smoker was a room of four-sided walls nailed with hardwood blackened from the fire and ash. Brick pits enclosed below the walls with dying coals soldering into a faint light. A rack of fish hanged above warm to the touch that thankfully did not scald Hiccup's fingertips when he unhooked them from their clips. His eyes widened when he noticed the lower number of fish. Eight fish.

There were no more than four salmon and four cods left in the entire castle.

He mentally cursed. How did he neglect looking over the stores? Even if he devoured less food than most he still needed to eat. He was more proficient in keeping a sharp eye on the amount of food that was kept.

"Very well, I will have to eat smaller portions for the time being." Hiccup thought aloud and then silently adding to himself he would have to ask Toothless for him to retrieve some more fish.

On the other hand, the fish Toothless brought back always acquired a rather unappealing taste. Somehow the Night Fury unsuspectingly trickled his saliva onto every fish he brought back for Hiccup. He, of course, was far too polite to criticize with the dragon being his only source to the outside world. Or he was at least until \_she\_ appeared out of the blue.

Hiccup sighed. He was hoping to have forgotten about her by that point. All of the good remembering Valkyrie ever did was make him feel miserable. In the very brief moments, he shared with her; he wanted nothing less than a connection. True she had assaulted him physically with injuring his arm and head, attempted to interrogate, emphasis on \_terro-r\_, him once and had shown to be hostile in the most unnecessary of ways, but she acted on none of the worse fears Hiccup had for the villagers. Until then, she had not revealed his occupancy inside the castle. She might have had every right to, but for some reason Hiccup had not seen any of the constables return. Not since the day he escorted the young lady out through the grand doors he had not seen any signs of the lawmen's return. The weather could have been a contributing factor though Hiccup doubted the idea since the people of Berkenshire were known to have stubbornness issues. His father was a prime example of that expression.

Returning to his prior duties, Hiccup carried the fish using both hands and prepared to walk out of the small room. He stopped in his tracks he heard the noticeable sound shoes against the floor. The sound did not come from his feet and would not certainly come from Toothless with how large he was. His heartbeat accelerated while he attentively walked to the door. Inwardly he gasped at seeing the silhouette of a familiar form. When the figure moved, Hiccup could see who it was, and he was so shocked that he nearly dropped the fish out of his hands.



"Valkyrie?"

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Yes I am such a terrible person aren't I? But don't cha worry a new chapter will be coming out soon and there will be even more surprises in that one. XD Of course the last one was a bit of a cliffy too but again all will be explained in the next one.

Happy belated 4th of July for my American readers and a huge congrats goes to Germany for the win against Brazil on the 8th for the FIFA World Cup. I'm sure you're all proud. (I cheer for Argentina due to the fact my bro's favorite player Messi is on the team and he's like the best playah evah according to everyone that cares enough about soccer/futbal. XD I like the sport since it's the only one I can understand how they are playing. XDDD)

And yes, Hiccup DID invent the telescoping ladder. Twice. XDDDD Because why not? If he could make a prosthetic fin for Toothless in the movie and a freakin' flame sword and flight suit in the sequel I wouldn't be surprised if he invented a horse-less carriage if he wanted to, too.

Saltswimmys \_â€" Dragonese for fish.

Warmadi-tootsies \_â€" Dragonese for fire.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 14. Metamorphosis

**\*\*Q-A: \*\***Well my first HTTYD story has reached almost 105 reviews. **\*Cries tears of joy\*** This must mean you really like me. (; Oh I love you guys too. After seeing HTTYD2 for the third time yesterday (7/11/14) I love it even more. My bro though didn't like the writing too much (not the jokes he DID find those funny and everything elseâ€|. **\*Sigh\***) Well we can't all win. As for me I still love every bit of the movie slight faults and all. Now this chapter is going to be a lot of fun for a lot of reasons. That I of course won't spoil. I'm not even going to tell you what lullaby he sang for Toothless, that will be revealed all in good time.

This chapter goes to Lady-Von-Bielefeld for her kind reviews and her entertaining and heartfelt story To Be With You. I suggest you give it a read if you're still in a CURSEDHiccup mood. The banter between him and Astrid is adorable, something that I hope to capture in my own writings. :D

**\*\*Response to reviews:\*\***

**\*\*flame101: \*\***Thank you for reviewing the chapter. I hope to hear more from you in this one and a few more. :)

**\*\*Disclaimer: \*\***I own nothing. If I did I would be a lot richer than anything right now. :D

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Metamorphosis<strong>

August 30, 2010 (early evening; Hofferson residence)~

Silence inside the kitchen made the tension so thick that a double-ended axe couldn't cut it through. Astrid never thought of her father as a dangerous man. The closest he ever came to anger was arguing with Mr. Ack for nearly selling him the half-eaten fish at the market a year ago. In spite of her father's usual temperament, she suddenly felt small. She remembered how nervous she was as a child whenever getting into some conflict (spending time with the Thorston twins since childhood did lead to some distrust from adults). Aside from the fact that her father never once touched Astrid in a threatening way, but he still had the best blank stare that could translate to anything from uninterested to 'you have no idea what I am thinking but it's certainly not good.' It was a talent unheard of from the Hofferson clan with them being the champions of death glares and determined looks. Astrid's father probably picked up his blank look from his mother's side of the family.

Erik had noticed his daughter's discomfort and softened his expression. He became the bold one and evenly asked, "What Ruffnut said was true then? Yoo're having trouble with a boy?"

Astrid was bewildered by her father's mood. All this time she had worried herself with him taking it the wrong way but instead he soundedâ€¦ entertained? What on earth \_did \_Ruffnut say on the phone?

"Wellâ€¦ maybe?" Astrid offered with a shrug.

"Astridâ€¦"

"I said maybe!"

"That's not a real answer, Astrid."

The girl winced, annoyed of her father's insistence.

"Why should it matter? It's nothing important."

"If it concerns my daughter then I would find it **\*\*important\*\***. Anything yoo say is worth listening."

Astrid sighed. She always hated it when her father pulled that card.

"There was this boy I met a week after school started." she regaled, reluctantly. "He's this little beanpole of a guy who speaks with a stutter that I swear was a speech impediment and gets on mah nerves easily."

"He at least doesn't sound like a troublemaker." her father simplified with sanguinity. He carefully held back an endearing look as Astrid went over to the counter to collect napkins. If only Brenda were alive to see this.

"Yoo seem surprisingly calm fer knowin' that I'm talkin' about a guy here." Astrid thought pointing the obvious would help ease the retreating tension. She didn't want to step on her father's toes that

soon in the evening.

"Probably 'cuz I know yoo can wallap any lad that looks at yoo a funny way." Her father deadpanned. "Don't try acting innocent. Everybody in town knows it's true."

"Try telling that to the schoolboys mah age." Astrid griped while staring at the table for a moment. She never noticed how many planks of wood were chipped off. "And besides I haven't been hurting any boys, as of late." she added hastily with a sidelong glance.

"Well, that's good," said Astrid's father, setting a kettle onto the stove after filling it up with water. "I wouldn't want another visit from Chief Constable Jorgenson again."

Astrid fumed and crossed her arms. "That only happened **\*\*thrice\*\*** and all of those times were fer self-defense. As it came from unequivocal evidence," she recited the last part from the hearing she went to inquiring of her reason forâ€| protecting herself.

"Coming from yoo I don't believe that." her father held back a smirk from her returning glare. "Now enough with this changing the subject let's get back to this boy of yours."

\_It's like he's trying to get me pissed at him. \_Astrid pulled up a chair and settled herself at the table. It was no use to beating around the bush. While it was easy for her to not tell her father everything, it was far more difficult when he did find something out and wanted a straight answer. But what could she say? It wasn't like her dad known about her visits to the castle and she certainly didn't want him to know anytime soon. It would be for the best if she kept her mouth shut around Ruffnut for then on out.

"He's not mine." That much was true. She wanted nothing to do with him. "I don't know him, but he frustrates me, dad. I just-ugh-sometimes he shifts around me like a startled sheep and other times it's like he's really a wolf in disguise. I wanted tah figure 'im out but when I tried to, heâ€| he," Astrid trailed off. Suddenly she wasn't so sure if telling her father the next bit was a good idea. She was already embarrassed from how weak she sounded. Hoffersons aren't supposed to be weak, no matter what everyone else falsely believed.

Erik's eyebrows rose. "He what?"

"He-he, left me." Astrid painfully admitted in a low voice. Her deceased relatives would be ashamed of her. "I couldn't talk to him after that."

"Well, I'm not sure what I'm more surprised to hear, that yoo got chucked by some boy I still don't know or that yoo actually minded it."

Astrid fought the urge to roll her eyes, remaining composed. "I didn't get to ask him the questions that were bothering me and thanks to the storm I couldn't get around to it. And don't even ask about school, that's a lot more complicated."

"So after going to find this boy and to ask him about yerâ€| conundrum he leaves yoo on the spot, yoo decide that's enough and

give up." Mr. Hofferson summed up in one go.

Astrid became aghast. "I never said-"

"No yoo didn.' I'm not accusing my daughter of anythin' rash." Erik interjected, "But yoo better make up yer mind after the first try instead of calling it quits. I don't believe that's the same Astrid I helped raised. Talk to the lad, explain yerself to him, and \_then \_give him a wallop or two if that'll make ya feel better."

"It might." Astrid pursed her lips, holding back a childish pout. A large whistling noise could be heard, steam coming from the kettle.

"Ahh, that would be the tea then." Astrid's father walked over to the stove and poured the hot water in two mugs. "Would yoo prefer jasmine or green tea?"

"Jasmine; with a spot of honey." Astrid answered. She wanted to make herself useful and began to set the table properly with plates for the dinner. While using a spatula and a large spoon, she placed a medium sized helping of the kedgerree on each plate. The tea was set moments later as the two Hoffersons sat down for good.

"Cheers, in hopes that this blasted weather will come to an end." Erik lifted his mug with a wistful expression.

Astrid mirrored her father and repeated the same, knowing he would have another \_exciting\_ day of not being a fisherman and attempt with bargaining with Mr. Ack, again.

\_When the storm does finally stop, I'll like to see how Hermit will evade me next time. \_

She smiled as a new plan formed in her mind and brought her drink to her lips.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup shivered. His breathing became shallow.<p>

He had not expected this to happen.

Some many different scenarios filled his head all of which turned worse than the first. A desperate part of him was almost feeling relieved to see Valkyrie again (he was unaware if she survived the storm or not), but he did not find her arrival convenient. Reason one, he was in the kitchen wearing clothes not presentable enough for company. Reason two, the more obvious worry he held came from her being \_inside \_his home and the precious amount of time he had left. He lost more of it when he dropped the fish from his hands after becoming aware of her presence and foolishly calling out her name. The moment she turned her head his way Hiccup came up with a maneuver promptly.

With his scrawny, but agile, legs the boy ducked his head and reallocated himself behind the large barrels of aged ale. He ran across the room faster than he ever did before and pressed himself against the wood as though he were attempting to become one with the barrel. Something, which Hiccup thought his father, had done in a

more figurative sense that involved liquor being drank instead of pressing his body over a wooden keg.

Hiccup almost laughed but quickly choked it down in the last second. He needed to be quiet.

"Hermit?"

\_Slink away and hide. Remain concealed.\_ Rules Hiccup disobeyed played over in his mind. Maybe if he tried hard enough and kept quiet she might grow tired of this so-called game and leave. Forever, this time forever.

Hesitation began to take shape within Hiccup much to his discomfort. He despised how weak he was turning into. Why couldn't he have shared more of his father's traits as a brave man who never hid from oppressors? The man who he sadly admitted he may never become, for a few reasons.

"I know yer here, Hermit."

Against all reasoning again Hiccup titled his head, thrusting it far enough to see around the kilderkin until he could properly see an exasperated looking Valkyrie. "H-how on earth could you have possibly found me?"

His insufferable stammer plainly audible but turned brave to leave one quip. "The first time you walked inside here you ended up lost for half an hour."

"I followed the mud-covered tracks all the way from the knight armor in the entrance hall." Valkyrie said, equally clever, both arms crossed.

\_Oh, damn it all. \_

He knew he should have cleaned those floors again. Well, now he was dealing with the consequences and had to clean things up more ways than one. Hiccup almost wanted to start apologizing for leaving her when Toothless kidnapped him. He nearly did say how sorry he was until his mind caught up with his mouth. The logic behind not answering Valkyrie was that she would begin inquiring him **\*\*why\*\*** he left. That would not be a good discussion to delve.

Instead, Hiccup decided to turn the interrogation around and gave Valkyrie, a direct question. "What are you doing here?"

"I came here tah get some answers." she answered curtly, equal in demand but sounding far more confident.

"About what exactly?"

"Cummoan," the girl groaned, from the angle Hiccup observed he saw her scowl. Her blue eyes shined with fury beneath her yellow fringe.

"I had it just about here with all these excuses yoo've been giving me. I want a straight answer from yoo." As she spoke her feet took more than a few steps forward, right where Hiccup pathetically took cover.

"About what?" Hiccup asked nervously.

"Who are yoo? And why did yoo bring mah ball back?"

"Those are two different questions."

Valkyrie waved it off as if what Hiccup said didn't matter. "I don't care, I still want answers. So yoo better start talking or else."

"Or else what? You'll whack me with your metal stick again?" The only few times he wasn't stumbling his words was when he ran with his mouth. It never led to anything good sadly.

"Don't tempt me." Hiccup heard a very audible noise of the 'torch' slapping back and forth against what sounded like her clasped hand. Not wanting to get into any forms of violence the boy reluctantly moved away from his hiding place only to come within a yard from Valkyrie. He yelped in alarm and fell down on the floor. Neither one was laughing at the situation as Hiccup had to pick himself up from the fall. Valkyrie made no movement to help him. Hiccup could not help himself from glaring at the girl.

She returned the look with an intensity that challenged the sun's.

"All right let us come up with a compromise for this-these issues we are obviously having." Hiccup offered, diplomatically. He could recall his father using that line when he argued with someone, often with his wife.

"Like what?"

"Well, uh if the question is something out of my limits to answer than I won't." When she started protesting, he raised a hand to silence her. "That's my decision. I-it seems fair enough doesn't it?"

Valkyrie did not appear entirely convinced but conceded. "Fine. But I still want honest answers. Nothing vague, deal?"

"I'm not sure how I feel about that."

"Yoo better, or elseâ€¦"

"Again with the threats and suddenly this conversation is feeling one-sided."

"Do we have a deal or don't we?"

Hiccup sighed and nodded grudgingly. "Deal."

"Great, nowâ€¦ what made yoo decide to bring back the bashyball to me that night?"

\_Is that all? \_Hiccup bit back a chuckle. He did not realize how simple this was going to be if all she wanted to know then he would have her back in her home before sunset. Victory for Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III.

"Well, if you must know, I wanted to be a gentleman and bring back your ball since it's the polite and correct thing to do," Hiccup answered with a slight smug air.

That had to appease the lady enough.

"Bullshit," the uncouth lady answered quickly, carrying an unconvinced expression.

The victory retracted from the young Haddock.

"All right fine, I sent the ball back to you so that you wouldn't get the nerve again to try and revisit."

"Yoo could've been more clever and left the ball in a more obvious spot than mah front lawn." Hiccup caught the word 'stalker' underneath her breath. He was not any less pleased with that moniker than the name Hermit.

"Then what was I supposed to do with the ball? Leave it out in the field and hope someone finds it instead?"

"'Would've been better if it were them than me."

Hiccup cringed. He never had been so insulted in his life, which meant a long time from his perspective.

"If all you came here to insult me then you are more than free to return to your home of residence." Hiccup frowned with a shake of his head.

"I'm not done with yoo just yet. I still need tah know what yoo left me when I came back."

Hiccup felt his courage leaving him when he realized he did not conceive a good enough explanation.

"It's rather difficult to explain."

"I can wait."

"It's just that there is no part of this I can tell you without **\*\*risking\*\*** our relationship." Hiccup said, defensively.

"Well, since we don't have one yoo have nothing tah lose." she took a few steps forward, carrying her 'torch' in the air preparing to do God, and Gods' knows what to him.

Hiccup tried suppressing the urge to cower when his eyes trailed downward in the direction of the girl's legs. Hiccup did not in anyway have a wicked mind toward women. He would never dare look upon a woman's ankles. It did not help him though with Valkyrie wearing a green dress that greatly went above said ankles. The poor boy did not notice before due to the anxiety he suffered from the girl and his dragon friend, but now he did. The point of Hiccup's interest truly weighed from the grazed knee he suddenly took notice.

"What," Hiccup paused off before finding the courage to continue.  
"What happened to your leg?"

Valkyrie's wounded leg shifted, subconsciously responding to Hiccup's question. Naturally she was in denial.

"It's just a scratch, I slipped when walking up here."

"A scratch, you're leg is bleeding!" Hiccup cried, incredulous.

"...I've had worse."

Hiccup shook his head, baffled by her unbending nature. Were all women this stubborn or only the mad ones? "A flesh wound is still a flesh wound. That needs to be looked after."

"What?"

"Come, I can help clean it."

Valkyrie stepped back. "Yoo are not touching any part of mah body. And mah leg is fine." She wasn't putting much weight on the limb. Her lying did not go unnoticed by Hiccup.

"I will not let someone bleed all over this floor or the rest of castle grounds." Hiccup chimed lightly, aiming to lighten the mood slightly. She did not smile. "Please, Valkyrie you are hurt. I want to help you." He was taken back slightly from how honest he sounded.

As true as his pleads were they did not improve Valkyrie's mien. He held out his hand for her but lowered his gaze, a sign of respect. He still did not forgive her for the hurtful words she said before, but he would not let an innocent girl die from her injuries or infection. All the warriors in his father's old stories were killed off more from sickness than actual casualties.

After the minutes passed by between them, for what felt like hours in Hiccup's point of view, Valkyrie surprised him a second time that day with accepting his hand, only to swat it away.

"I can walk fine on mah own. Just lead me to where yoo can patch me up."

"Please let me be a crutch for you, so you don't put too much stress on the leg." Hiccup pleaded helplessly.

"Try touching me and I'll give you a leg tah match mine." Valkyrie spoke tightly.

"Well I do not think we need to go to extremes. It is only a scratch after all." Hiccup beamed in good humour.

He was punched in the shoulder without delay.

\* \* \*

><p>There were many foolhardy incidents Astrid tried to steer clear from in the past (<em>What was going through mah head as a child that encouraged me tah hang out with Ruff' and Tuff' all the time?<em>). This one, this one, had to be one of the worst decisions she ever



made. Her parents always warned her about trusting strangers, and there she was falling into Hermit's clutches.

â€|.

That was irrational thinking. Even with an injured leg she could easily outrun impaired girl wasn't in her right mind at the moment. But still, following Hermit was the last thing she wanted to do and yet, there she was.

They walked out of room Astrid believed was the kitchen and then down the hall toward another chamber she passed by with little notice. The throbbing on her knee heated, profoundly, forcing her usual stride to weaken and she almost stumbled over a loose stone tile. She hated weakness, almost as much as how she was acting then. In due time, Hermit halted before an arched-shaped door closed off by a smooth dark brown door. Astrid glanced at Hermit questioningly, and he returned an expression that she perceived as nervousness. He twisted the door handle, opening to a room that Astrid could only describe as **\*\*\_whoa\_\*\***.

Calling the large common room a room was an understatement. Comparing to one-half of her house and possibly the grand main ballroom at town hall, the chamber they entered was large in both size and stature. The walls were stone though unlike the rest of the castle these had richly decorated weaponry of old shields and hatchets that Astrid liked to believe were from the age of Vikings. Tapestries sewn with rich reds and gold emphasized on the Viking culture with sailing ships traveling toward an island that most likely represented Berkenshire long ago. Surprisingly there were no signs of dust, cobwebs, or mold on any of the ornaments. There was so much to take in that Astrid was nearly overwhelmed.

"It takes my breath away too." Hermit's voice brought the blonde back to her senses.

Inkling made its way to Astrid's mind. "Just how much of this stuff was here before yoo showed up?"

The reaction she got from him was far from what she initially expected. His green eyes narrowed down and the relaxed look he had moments ago quickly vanished, his upper lip curling into a grimace.

"What on earth gave you the idea I **\*\*would\*\*** commit thievery? All the objects here rightfully belong to this residence." he sighed, jaded, running a hand through his auburn hair. "I do not wish to argue with you, you're hurt and need medical attention."

"If yoo seriously think about touching me-"

"You have trusted me enough so far to lead you here, didn't you?"

Astrid grumbled, crossing her arms for what felt like the thousandth time that day. She hated appearing outwitted just as much as showing weakness.

Hermit must have thought of her seething silence as a sign of agreement before he hurried along to an upholstered bench near the

giant bare fireplace. He yanked the furniture's cushion upright to reveal a not-so secret apartment inside. His free hand went in pulling out what appeared to be a basket woven up of wicker in a style Astrid had felt she'd seen before but couldn't correctly place.

"Allow me," Hermit said after bringing the container filled with something foreign between two large leather armchairs that towered over a wooden table. He kneeled on the ground and motioned Astrid to follow. After sighing, she compelled and sat next to him a good (and safe) distance, legs gently crossed, so her hurt leg wasn't twisted or pressed down as Hermit's were.

Silently she watched the boy unbuckled a belt that clasped the basket shut, revealing dozen of little bottles and cans sealed with beeswax. Her eyes trailed off to a rusting saw tied under the lid. Her right hand twitched nervously. Hermit must have seen her discomfort because he smiled softly, sympathizing perhaps. She did not know. A moment passed and both of them silently pretended what happened didn't as Hermit reached out for a bottle that fit the palm of his hand and was filled with a see-through liquid. He then unsheathed a small knife from under his girdle (\_How could I have not noticed that there? \_Astrid thought later.), and scrapped it around the waxy sealant until the cork could be accessible to pull out. After a few tries Hermit cursed quietly far from Astrid's hearing range, visibly annoyed with the bottle closed on him.

"Here, let me help." Astrid said, rolling her eyes after Hermit began moping and taking the cork out with ease.

"I, uh, did with most of the pulling."

Astrid couldn't help but snicker. He was such a boy. "Right sure yoo did." she chimed sarcastically. She eyed the liquid inside the bottle cautiously. "What's this stuff anyway?"

"Rubbing alcohol," Hermit answered before further explaining, "I don't trust the beer and wine back in the kitchen. Also, the basket here carries a few cotton wrappings and soothing cream to help heal the cut more than just killing bacteria."

Astrid blinked. She knew something was odd about the hermit before her, but she didn't think he was a health genius either.

Hermit brought out the cotton fiber bindings with a jar of white gel Astrid guessed was the soothing cream he mentioned earlier and placed them on the table. Except for the alcohol. He peered over to her with an unclear look that confused her for a moment. Why was he just staring at her? What was he waiting fo\_oh\_.

"If I may," Hermit said.

"Fine." Astrid pulled a face but lifted her leg up until it stood perpendicularly. Hermit's mouth trembled almost as though he was trying to smile in gratitude before he started placing the alcohol over her knee. Astrid winced but continued letting Hermit brushing his fingers over her leg. She tried not to think too hard about that last part. The pain obviously had gone to her head, how else could she allow the beanpole to touch her? The sting soon stopped pulsating after Hermit wiped away the dried blood. Then he covered the skin

with cream that improved with cooling the wound down immensely. Hermit placed the wrappings skillfully, not being too tight but not at all loose.

"There, that should keep the wound from exposure until a proper medical physician may examine it." Hermit spoke with his usual odd choice of words again.

"Don't ya mean a doctor?"

"So that's what they are called now," he whispered, confusing her.

"What?"

"Nothing."

She brushed away the odd boy's words before she tested out the leg. Astrid examined the bandages thoroughly before giving Hermit, her approval. She decided that the dressing would suffice until she could do something on her own that didn't involve professional help. The last thing she wanted was for the wrong people (namely her dad) to find out about her injury and why she had it.

"Do yoo really think I need a doctor tah see this?" Astrid asked carefully, keeping her voice even and casual.

"The cut is very deep. It'll certainly need to be examined." Hermit said firmly. He tilted his head in interest then said, "How did you get that cut? I hope you hadn't been messing around with an axe," he jested.

"I said that I slipped when walking up here." It was a partial truth; she did slip on a wet rock when running up to the castle.

Hermit rolled his eyes at her before placing all the health supplies away. "Walking, right of course you were."

"Never heard of sprinting?"

"I have, I just don't think it leads to cutting your knee open."

"It's only fun if yoo get a scar out of it."

"Oh, but of course. Pain; I live for it." Hermit's tone became dull for a moment before returning to his normal outlook with the slight cheery tenor back. His back turned from her while placing the basket away allowing Astrid to have enough time to look around.

The room had natural light pouring in from a large window covered in glass that showed a magnificent view of the northern sea. Astrid betted if she squinted hard enough she might even see some of the fisherman ships across on the bay. Her attention returned to the inside of the room to look more at the ornate decorations. She gave each tapestry a held gaze full of intrigue but stared longer at the few weapons leaning over the fireplace. Above those appeared to be a large rectangular painting or portrait hanging over the mantel, covered by a yellowed sheet that may have been white years ago. On the opposite side of the room bookcase filled to the brim with

several books made of leather book-bindings. Out of curiosity Astrid walked over to the shelf with the first book that spied her interest.

"Ah no, you not actually supposed to lookâ€|" Hermit failed with his stutter turning back on him, then hurrying to where she stood.

"What are-" Astrid wanted to open a page from the book she held until Hermit tried grabbing it from her hands.

"Those are mine-I mean I made them." Hermit bit his lower lip and averted his gaze. Astrid wasn't sure if he was lying or being nervous again. "They are myâ€|. They are my journals."

Astrid's eyebrows rose considerably with her eyes looking back to the multiple books rested on the two shelves. "Yoo wrote all of these? There has tah be like twenty of them. When did yoo start writing, the day yoo were born?"

"Eh, no. I did have an early education thanks to my mother and father." Hermit answered awkwardly.

"So yoo were homeschooled?" Astrid narrowed her eyes at him, looking over at his uncommon wardrobe and his jumpy form. His face was red from what she thought might've been embarrassment.

"Yes."

Figures. That explained the odd range of social skills the boy had and everything else, all except for him living alone in an abandoned castle that is. Her eyes peered over at the book again until Hermit asked, "No, please-don't read them."

"What too personal?"

Hermit nodded.

"Lucky. I have tah show mah journal entries to mah teacher. He doesn't like 'em." Why in God's name was she speaking this toward the beanpole? She wasn't going to be giving her life story to some random person. A person who had only just helped with her wounded leg without asking anything in return, her conscience added sniped.

Ahh, guilt turned out to be a cruel mistress indeed, Astrid thought to herself again. Some houseguest she was turning out to be.

Sometime later, with Hermit leading her back to the front doors, Astrid mulled over everything that had transpired between the two teenagers. While she spent a good hour being nothing but a bitch to the boy, he was trying very hard not to snap at her. Putting sarcasm aside, he genuinely treated her well. All she did was threatening him and calling him out on stealing which she didn't have to worry since he wasn't the type of bloke to care for swords and hanging rugs. Or at least from what she gathered from all the times she met with Hermit. She inwardly sighed. There was absolute zero information she actually knew about him. She didn't even know his real name. Her natural paranoia had been the cause behind it her not wanting to know, but now she did. Whether coming from guilt or leg injury Astrid

knew one thing then; she wanted to be nice for Hermit for once before leaving.

"Listen, Hermit." Astrid slowed down, stopped walking altogether in order to get Hermit's attention.

"Yes, Valkyrie?" Her plan work as Hermit ceased his movement too, though he had an unreadable stare.

"I justâ€¦. What I'm trying to say is," she sighed irritably for not getting her words across properly. "I'm not really good at this whole apologizing thing." Whoops.

Hermit's jaw slowly opened.

"No, that didn't come out right. Sorry." She said it. She actually said the word. Suddenly it became less challenging for her to find the right words. "I'm sorry fer being such a-well basically a bitch, a shrew, a harpy. Whatever phrase sounds better fer yoo I've been all those things. Yet yoo've been polite and honest, I just hurt yoo," she trailed off breathing out a sigh of relief for getting to the point.

"I think you're doing all right," Hermit offered kindly but all too sudden, his voice lowered and his eyes widening, "Though I think it would be better if you were not doing this now."

"Hey, I'm trying to be sincere here," Astrid spoke sharply. How dare this boy treat her apology like it meant nothing to him. It did, right?

"I can see that, but perhaps you still need time to put your little speech amalgamated. How about you came back tomorrow? I'm sure you'll have everything straight by then."

He started to walk to the grand hall, but Astrid beat him to it and blocked his path. Her look was stone cold.

"Yoo're doing the same thing like you did last time." Her eyes started softening when an idea came to her mind. She never thought of something like it before but maybe, "Am I just that repulsive to yoo?"

Hermit shook his head, the brownish hair swaying around like a mop. "No, no you're not in any shape or form! I just-you really need to go now before," he paused, not bothering to finish as his breathing became haggard.

Her previous hostility disappeared, stepping toward Hermit after seeing him crouching down with an grunt that did match his form.

"What's wrong? Are yoo sick?" she tried to place a hand on his shoulder but he jerked back, body shaking.

"No, I-I you need to leave," Hermit insisted while placing his arms around himself as if he were shivering from an invisible cold. Astrid was unsure what to do, if to either go by that point or not. Her chance to decide ended when she became momentarily perplexed at seeing something around the boy's eyes or something in

them.

Hermit's forest green eyes bulged, in a way that could not be considered humanly with his pupils expanding until shrinking into slits seconds later. The fingernails digging into his head were now thickening and turning black as his skin began to follow a similar development. But it wasn't his skin that was turning black but tiny black scales moved their way over the surface. Large black round fins began popping right out of the boy's skull and fanning out as a sort of crown in a twisted sort of way from what Astrid was seeing. His light brown hair remained on his head though his ears shrank then shifted behind the fin plates. Arms and legs expanded in height and width reaching a foot higher than Astrid. She fell hard on the floor, forced to reel in everything she dared to witness. The metamorphosis was nearing completion as the clothes Hermit worn ripped to shreds leading a pair of bat-like wings to stretch out with their edges nearly touching the ends of the hall. A long tail with four thin, wide flippers thinner and more aerodynamic than the smaller ones on the head, grew. The tail extended placing the thin appendages apart, two at the tip and the slightly bigger ones closer to the body.

It ended. The remaining sounds heard inside that corridor were the haphazard breathing coming from where Hermit once stood. Now a large creature Astrid could see standing on its hind legs in such a way that almost being human.

What happened next truly terrified Astrid so much that it was beyond understanding. The green snake eyes belonging to the black creature stared at her that was far too familiar. Its jaw lowered, showing two rows of small, but menacingly sharp teeth that could not be part of a human-sized head but were indeed present. The mouth curled down that Astrid could only identify it being a forlorn expression that was so upsetting to look at. For the first time, Astrid could not stare back, her courage gone.

She turned her face, away from the deceitful monster she did not want to give her pity.

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph," were the words uttered from Astrid. What else should she have said in reaction to the ungodly abomination she had seen occurring before her eyes? All the questions that once swam in her mind were all laid flat, and forgotten as the pounding of her heart made it impossible to hear them moreover.

Her body tensed when seeing out the corner of her eye talon feet slowly trying to make their way towards her. She curled her legs into a slight ball, keeping herself far away as possible.

What completed the whole nightmarish episode for Astrid was hearing \_\*\*his \*\*\_voice from the monster, entirely unhinged by any growls or animalistic sounds she had so expected.

"Valkyrie I-"

He did not have time to finish when a new black shape appeared sauntering in a quadrupedal nature compared to the bipedal stance the monster-turned-boy was doing.

Now there were two monsters in Astrid's midst.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>You know I try REALLY hard to not end my chapters with cliffhangers but for some reason they always do, ugh. XP I hope you guys aren't hating me for it. Or that it took way longer for this to come out. Sorry, laziness is the worst kind of disease out there along with driving lessons and dog-sitting, which I need to do right now as I type this sentence. Oh the things I do for a living. The references I put in this chapter oh, how fun they were.

Anybody who knows Monty Python will be smiling in amusement. For those hardcore HTTYD fans would know some of the dialogue Astrid and Hiccup shared was from some early drafts of the first movie. I know this thanks to this long behind-the-story vid. I read on youtube that was over 50 minutes long and I loved every second of it. There was this one scene in it where during a session with Jay and Gerard had him learning of the former's impersonation of his Scottish accent and how exactly does he react to it? I can't spoil it but it made me laugh for like five minutes. XD But beside that the whole thing was just wonderful with the directors showing from start to finish of how they finished that sucker of a film. Anyone that's a filmmaking student or just like watching the process of every stage of a animated movie being made would love to watch it.

Here's a link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDsFQIWVfEQ&list=PLYzdIo8TZe2LsXLqa8Rt\\_RA&index=144](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDsFQIWVfEQ&list=PLYzdIo8TZe2LsXLqa8Rt_RA&index=144)

Anywho, back to the plot.

I wanted to mention this back on the top but felt it would be too spoiler-ish by explaining the meaning for today's chapter. The whole term for metamorphosis stems to the meaning of a change or transformation in both parts of our main characters. With Hiccup it's obviously his nightly change to a dragon while Astrid was a bit more symbolic with her starting to change from within. She never did really apologize to people before after all. Not even her dad that much speaking of whichâ€¦

Astrid and Erik's relationship does act confusing at times doesn't it? Well for the most part I like to see them as two people who are aware of the bigger problems they have but would rather avoid them and deal with more day-to-day issues instead. Yep, they have some emotional baggage and a heavy case of denial. Also Astrid isn't too comfortable with talking about everything in her life with Erik as much as Ruffnut but obviously she'll have to retract on that level of trust I believe. XD

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 15. Forging Bonds

**\*\*Q-A: \*\***Hey there guys (and girls XD)! Last chapter was sure a doozy huh? I was sure surprised by the feedback with all of you being so positive towards. I was afraid you all might've thought it was too soon or something like that. Well as this story is, kinda, following the plot of the first movie (man I can't I get to say that finally) so there is going to be some steps that go that familiar direction,

but mark my words when I say this will be its own spin.

I was going to title this chapter 'Forbidden Friendship' but it didn't seem like the right phrase to use for our heroes, and Toothless. XD

**\*\*Response to reviews:\*\***

**\*\*flamel01:** **\*\*It was interesting to write up Hiccup's Transformation again. I had to be sure not to re-use the same words I did before. I mostly was inspired by stories of Beauty and the Beast along with the reactions Astrid had in novelizations of HTTYD on this site no less. :D**

**\*\*AngryHenry:** **\*\*Good to hear from you again, I'm glad you're enjoying yourself. More awesome stuff heading out in this chapter for sure.**

**\*\*angryhenry:** **\*\*(I'm guessing this is you again 'AngHen' but I'm not too sure) You'll just have to wait and see what happens next.**

**\*\*Disclaimer:** **\*\*If I did own HTTYD I would make it possible for Alexander Rybak's \_Into A Fantasy \_to be purchased in the US. (I want that song so badly. Darn you iTunes and your restrictions! DX)**

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Forging Bonds<strong>

For every answer that is made a decision came into being. Despite what most people would like to believe there were always two or more options that can be used for as an answer. The choices stem from reacting to what has been said or heard, and the last one was when a person knew which options to take and if they may lead down the correct path.

Unfortunately, rational thinking had this tendency to evaporate from the air whenever some unexpected event occurred. And both the girl and dragon-boy were stuck in the middle.

\* \* \*

><p>August 30, 2010 (past sunset)~<p>

Astrid sensed that her mind went blank the moment she saw... Whatever the hell she had just seen happened was-in a word-**\*\*impossible\*\***. In all the school years she was forced to study biology and science (which wasn't all too mediocre despite how little funded the education system in Berkenshire was) none of it prepared her or explained the sight she was forced to behold in front of her very eyes.

She-her mind couldn't comprehend it but what she saw was the truth. The boy-she was refusing to call him by his alias-turned into what her brain interpret as a, well a dragon. Or at least he-it looked like a fire breathing dragon but still carried the shape of a human outline, and he-the thing had hair. There was still auburn hair on the head even with those oval-ish spikes protruding from above. Hair! How could this be happening and why to her of all people? This could



only happen in the books Fishlegs liked reading. Wait, what did that dragon book say about encountering a dragon?

Extremely dangerous, kill onâ€¦ Astrid's thinking went away when she spotted another displeasing sight.

A dragon, looking very much like the first, was on all fours. Its body wasn't lanky as the one that stood. It looked a bit longer too, and an estimated guess would say it preferred being close to the ground as opposed to standing upright. Even so it appeared in tune with its stance instead of looking lost and skittish. It barred the appearance of a strong and perhaps dignified animal. Or maybe arrogant was the right word to use with the way it angled its neck at that moment. The crawling dragon's own green eyes narrowed into slits moments after it noticed her in the hall. And it began to behave as though it were a snake, ready to overtake its prey.

Somehow staring into the eyes of the beast snapped Astrid out of her small spell. She was not going to get distracted this time. Slowly while secretly hiding her hands behind her back she shifted her weight to the balls of her feet (much to her left leg's disdain) to move her body from its curled position. She became ready to spring up at a moment's notice.

"Valkyrie please, I-may please," the dragon-turned-boy raised his-its front paws-hands(?) trying to show he meant no harm. Astrid didn't believe any of it. The dragon from behind remained still, glowering which the former didn't seem to notice.

Instinctively Astrid pushed herself as far as she could only to feel her back pressed up against the wall. She mentally cursed herself; she was being cornered in. What a joke!

"How can you be so calm?" she hoped that her outburst might help with the next step in her developing plan. "There's a bloody dragon next to you!"

"Ah, well you seeâ€¦ oh no." the black head lowered deflated out of embarrassment. "He is standing right behind me." It was not spoken as a question but as a statement of fact. Astrid held herself further back, dumbfounded. Either he-it was that much of a bawhead or he was far better at deception than he led on. **(1)**  
><strong>He turned his head for a moment, most likely so that he could see the other dragon.

This was it, her window of opportunity that slipped away with each passing second.

Ignoring the pain her leg inwardly screamed, fighting off the rational fear of being incinerated, defying the standard norm most captive damsels were expected to follow, Astrid jumped. She sprang into the air a few inches before using her athletic reflexes to elude the beasts (something that was/\*\*is\*\* a very stupid idea to do really, even dealing with dragons). Her determination outweighed the stinging leg as she ran faster than ever before. The blonde ran faster than in any of her Bashyball practices combined and certainly more from her first initial escape from Castle Haddock. None of those previous little sprints were dependent on her survival. She heard what sounded like struggling, but she knew not to turn back. It would slow her down for a moment and expose her face toward the pursuers.

Astrid wasn't even going to be daunted by the fact she still had not the faintest clue of finding the exit.

She started to think that maybe bringing her phone would've been a good idea. The smartphone had a mobile app for a world map.

\* \* \*

><p>From the first time Valkyrie fled Hiccup thought he was going to get killed, now he knew without a doubt he was going to die most definitely.<p>

Toothless gathered the same notion.

\*\*"Well, I suppose it's time to go barbeque us a human now, eh?"\*\*

Hiccup turned to the dragon, aghast.

\*\*"No, no. We're most certainly not going to do anything of the sort." \*\*

The true Night Fury snorted; aggravation envisaged in his feral eyes.

\*\*"I'm gonna have to disagree with you on this one like last time, friend."\*\*

Toothless shook his body to stretch his muscles in the preparation to charge right after the girl. Hiccup immediately caught sight of this and knew what had to be done. He was not going to allow Toothless to commit reckless actions without the cursed boy's consent. Uncharacteristically he collapsed over the larger Night Fury on purpose, clasping his upper limbs around the other's neck. The downed dragon growled aggressively and started wriggling around, swishing his tail and wings in hopes of swatting the clinging dragon-boy off his back.

\*\*"Get off!" \*\*Toothless snapped his fangs grinding together. \*\*"I'm not some pony to ride on."\*\*

Hiccup tightened his grip so he wouldn't slip, but not hard enough that he might strangle his difficult friend. If it were not for the additional strength coming from his dragon body, his resolve might not have lasted as long as it did.

Toothless' excessive banging on the floor helped little as made Hiccup's paws grow sore. He thought of reaching the other dragon's good nature with replying, \*\*"Then stop trying to vault like one and listen to reason."\*\*

\*\*"Do you want a reason?" \*\*Toothless shouted. With the pent up anger inside him, he bounded higher than he ever did while grounded. He succeeded in removing Hiccup from his spin, and he landed over to a support column of the hallway's arch.

Hiccup grimace from his wall collision, the pain being less unbearable as a dragon but still hurting him all the same. Toothless stalked over before giving a harrumph toward Hiccup.

\*\*\*\*\*Here's my reason. We can't have that female blabbering to the man village of you being here, unless you want to relocate yourself to the cave.\*\*\*

Hiccup struggled with lifting his dragon-arm to take hold of Toothless' wing but was unable to reach far enough. The upright Night Fury inhaled a long deep breath until emitting the echoing call to locate where Valkyrie exactly went.

Hiccup lowered his head, ashamed that he failed in keeping his true identity a secret and trying to save his lone human acquaintance from getting killed.

A second passed when Toothless' hunched position became rigid. Hiccup scrutinized curiously. The Night Fury only did that when his spotted something strange or unsettling. He hoped for the former.

Even stranger the black-scaled dragon shook his shoulders and started barking in a comedic manner. \*\*"Oh, my Allfather, you are going to love where the female ended up." \*\*He grinned his tooth-lacking grin.

Hiccup found this as an opportunity to get up without being tackled again while giving his friend undivided attention. He felt nervous to ask a question but decided to do so on the concern for Valkyrie's fate. He asked, and Toothless chuckled before answering with a query of his own.

\*\*\*"Why don't you go see for yourself? She should be in a room you're familiar with." \*\*

\*\*\*"I'm familiarâ€¦ Oh-oh."\*\*

Faster than a Speed Stinger Alpha, Hiccup charged down the hall until arriving at a recognizable ladder that led to an equally identifiable trapdoor. Wondering whether or not Toothless was completely truthful Hiccup sniffed the air and could find the faintest hint of vanilla and nutmeg coming toward his room. Yes, Toothless was indeed being truthful. Hiccup dropped his jaw in the inexplicable chances as Toothless crept behind him carrying an amused look.

\*\*\*"Well, the good news is I can't get up there thanks to that climb-y stick thing, but the bad news, for you at least, is that you can't get to her either."\*\*

Hiccup no longer felt surprised and instead showed his annoyance at the other useless reptile.

\*\*\*"Thank you for summarizing everything that just occurred, Toothless. You're a great help as always."\*\*

The dragon snorted not at all perturbed by Hiccup's words. He mirrored the same impassive expression until he turned the other way and began walking off unflappably.

\*\*\*"Oh, whoa-na-where do you think you're going?" \*\*Hiccup asked once he noticed Toothless departing from the tower.

Toothless curved his head distantly enough to see the cursed dragon-boy.\*\*\*"That female only needs one dragon to keep her up there

and since she's not obviously going anywhere, I want time to enjoy the last bits of sunlight today has to offer. Nothing personal I'm just bored right now."\*\*

\_I suppose I should consider this a blessing.\_ Hiccup thought. It was times like these he was glad to have befriended such a slothful lizard.

\*\*\*\*\*And you don't think during that time I'll be able to have her come down willingly?" \*\*Hiccup asked with a raised brow.

Toothless did not appear daunted by the bold proposal.

\*\*"Right, and by the first stars coming out I'll let her ride of my back." \*\*Toothless said sarcastically.\*\*"Pfft, whatever see ya."\*\*

He waddled out of the room without another delay. Hiccup sighed, resting his upper paws on his hips. His stance slumped back to its previous form when he remembered who was trapped in his bedchamber. A dry mouth and twisted stomach were joined together, not at all aiding in Hiccup's plight. He never felt this nervous being in front of his room before and had half a mind to rejoin Toothless out in the courtyard. The cursed boy quickly chastised himself for thinking so cowardly. His father on no account strayed from something as mundane as speaking to a woman. Then again Hiccup very well why he wasn't an exact replica of Stoick. Tentatively, but courageously, he walked closer to the ladder and placed a steady front paw-that triggered the braces, scraping against the ground stridently.

"Don't even think about climbing up here!" Valkyrie screeched through the floorboards.

Hiccup's head plates dropped and his eyes rounded despondently. He removed his paw off the ladder.

"I was hoping I could seek an audience with you and talk aboutâ€¦ to explain a few things."

"I won't listen to what yoo say tah me, yoo liar."

"Actually my real name is Hiccup."

"â€¦."

"Terrible name aside, I wanted to try talking with you," he pleaded.

"Didn't yoo hear me the first time? I don't want to talk. Especially to a monster."

"I am not a monster," Hiccup did all but snarl. He resented how unpleasant his previous tone sounded, but the girl's unyielding temper almost compelled him to lose his own. "When have I shown any signs of being one?"

"I don't know how about yoo turning into a giant dragon right before mah eyes," Valkyrie said as a matter of fact.

Hiccup felt resigned by the fact of what Valkyrie said held some

truth. He did go through the Transformation with her right in front of him. She had every right to be frightened after watching that grotesque display. Perhaps if he could enlighten her of the Curse? It was against everything his parents said (which by this point he seemed to deliberately ignore every chance he got) but if she already knew one part of it she might as well know the rest so he wouldn't be seen called a liar as she had rashly accused.

"There's a good explanation to why that happened-

"Whatever you're going to tell me I won't believe it."

He chose not to mind that indictment\_. \_"I do not wish to disagree with you-

"Too late."

"-but I wish for you to say you will give me one chance; one chance is all I am asking from you to talk things out between us."

A brief pause of silence hung in the air until Valkyrie said, "You sure are giving a lot of leverage for a prisoner."

Hiccup frowned, confused at what she said. "Since when are you my captive?"

"If I'm not a prisoner then why am I trapped in this tower?"

Hiccup did not directly answer the question but tried to speak rationally. "You can leave when you promise to keep your word of not telling anyone of me."

"Oh yeah, because the last thing I want to do is tell every sane person I know that I've been seeing a freaky dragon-boy and his giant black salamander with wings."

\_Glad to know irony hasn't evolved in the last two hundred years. \_Hiccup rolled his eyes. A part of him almost wanted to climb or even fly up to bring Valkyrie down himself and try and get some bit of sense into her. The dragon instincts inside him shivered enthusiastically at the prospect of destroying wood and confronting the girl. He attempted to recompose his thoughts and made it clear he would be patient with Valkyrie. Hiccup did not enjoy the idea of waiting on upper paw and lower-paw for the blond maiden, but he never viewed himself as the tyrannical master of the castle. He needed to respect her power to choose on what she wanted to do and to at least attempt with leaving her the benefit of the doubt.

"If I may try Valkyrie to say one thing to you," Hiccup clasped and unclasped his claws in anticipation. It was falling into evening and he did not want Astrid to be gone so long that her family and loved ones would end up missing her.

"Do I even have a choice by this point?"

"Yes, yes you do. Everybody is entitled to deciding what they want," Hiccup answered avidly, his arms thrashing around as if they had minds of their own. "You can tell me no, that you don't want me to talk, or me leave you for good or none of the aforementioned. It really is all up to you."

Another lapse of silence came again. It did not feel strained as before and instead made Hiccup believe that Valkyrie was listening to him for once. He smiled in gratitude to the girl even though he was fully aware she would not have seen his face.

"I will leave you to your thoughts then. I can wait as long as I can."

\_Believe me, I know from a long time of experience.\_

He bowed gently and stepped back, waiting for the eventual conclusion of the girl's judgment.

\* \* \*

><p>Astrid had to admit out of all the places she got lost in this one wasn't so bad. She mentally cursed for misplacing herself in what should have been an easy walk through the park, but with the added adrenaline and fear made her sense of direction go away and lead her to the ladder and flap. Seconds later she found herself in a furnished bedroom. The room was large and circular but felt cluttered from the papers and books spread all over. The floor and walls were covered with hand drawings. Drawn pictures of birds flying or resting along with fisherman boats sailing off in the distance, there was even a shaded depiction of the northern cliff sides that Astrid remembered going to a lot as a child. A four-poster bed was positioned on one side of the room. The quilt hanging over the mattress was green, and much to Astrid's surprise did not appear ripped or shredded, as she would have guessed. The room belonged to a monster like Herm-Hiccup-it didn't it?<p>

Hiccup.

That was his real name. If Astrid didn't remember the bizarre names of her mates, she would've brushed off the monster's name even more. Astrid huffed angrily. She hated herself for comparing the dragon to her friends. None of them deserved that kind of insult, even Ruffnut. She wondered how any of them would react if they were in her place instead. The twins would probably wonder how fast the room might burn if they brought a lighter. Fishlegs would just faint long before climbing up to the tower after seeing what she saw back in the hall. Snotlout probably might try acting brave and confront the dragons but would get easily scorched in the process. Heather would have no clue on fighting, but she might use her pretty little face to try and get her way out of the situation. Or even try being all sympathetic since that's all she ever seemed to be good at. While Cami, oh boy. Camicazi would have made mincemeat pie out of the fire breathing lizards Astrid had no doubt about that. The smaller, younger blonde would have had a real ball inside this nightmare of an estate; charging to and from the halls strutting around as though everything would belong to her and no one else and not allow any smelly boys inside.

It was fun and games then until Astrid's aimless wandering around the room caused her foot to step over an odd piece partly hidden behind one of the bedposts. Curious Astrid gently bent her knees to reach for the misshapen lump in order to look at it better in the retreating light from the lone window. The small little thing barely went over her hands and felt soft when her thumb pressed against it.

A toy was all it was. A toy stuffed animal made with brown button eyes and skewered stitching all in the shape of a dragon. It was a pudgy little thing made from some fabric that had faded into a light blue. It, alarmingly, was reminiscent of the dragons Astrid had just seen less than a half hour ago with the exception of having a round nose and four white horns on its head. She was about to discard the horrid trinket until her eyes detected prominent sewing on the little dragon's side. The stitches weren't meant to keep the blue material in place, but to show whoever held it that it belonged to someone else and who created the little mess.

\_To Hiccup, \_

\_Made by Mummy \_

She was ruined.

Astrid didn't know if she was ready to pass out or throwup. She felt repulsion, also confused. So many feelings swarming as logic and emotions battled it out within. How could she have been so blind? Of course it-he-Hiccup had parents. Everyone had parents, unless it was a sci-fi movie involving a genetic mutant or robot made in a lab but none that could be pinned on Hiccup. He didn't seem to enjoy turning into a dragon from the way she saw his face contort. He clearly lived in this castle all his life judging by the state of his room and how he acted around her. What ever happened to his parents? Did they seriously leave a boy like Hiccup all on his own? Did they reject him for his body? But how could they if his mum sewn a toy for him by hand? And what about that other dragon? Hiccup seemed familiar with it, was it supposed to be the big bad beasts in fairy tales that guarded the castle against potential heroes to save princesses? What did that make Hiccup? Some poor little boy with an unexplainable condition forced to spend the rest of his days alone?

Before Astrid could decide on what she should feel a gust of wind from outside blew through the room, giving a slight chill in the air. Astrid wrapped herself, annoyed with how thin the standard school's fabric of her sweater vest was, when one sheet of paper lifted up and landed near her feet. Astrid did not have much trouble recognizing what she saw within the picture.

She could see herself looking back at her but with the identifiable scowl that was always prominent on her features. For a brief moment she wanted to know if Hiccup had drawn more pictures of her, minus her aggressive nature.

Astrid nearly crinkled the edges of the paper with the toy still in her arms.

She now knew what needed to be done.

Opening the trapdoor earlier didn't leave her time to hesitate with the great fear of being chased by a dragon. But now, even with knowing how docile Herm-Hiccup was, Astrid stopped short. He did say to her that she could leave anytime she wanted if she didn't spill his secrets and she wondered if he still wanted to talk with her. She had only become conscious of the fact of how all this sounded silly again. If he didn't like her, he would have kicked her out ages ago. Even with her weak personality toward people she still puzzlingly had people like her enough. Yes, she could make this work. She's

practically a people person already. As she didn't want to waste anymore time (twilight had already come and gone) the brave blonde opened the latch, pulled the flap open and climbed down the stairs.

Through the process, her body began prickling, a steady sign of pre-discussion jitters that did not help in the least bit but she brushed it away like it didn't matter. She reached the bottom with exceptional ease. Her rucksack shook from the dismount until Astrid steadied it with her hand. She placed her attention to the room again with her eyes widening in astonishment.

Her-Hiccup-she \*\*really \*\*needed to get his name right-was nowhere to be found. One-half of Astrid's brain screamed joyfully at the prospect of escaping without the dragon/boy being none the wiser until she imagined the guilt she'd receive for going. With the bitterness of leaving fresh on her mind, Astrid opted for the one that didn't leave a bad taste in her mouth and went ahead with searching for Hiccup.

She didn't have much trouble finding a lead to where Hiccup might have been located after spotting the mud tracks belonging to a dragon. The girl wasn't entirely sure if they were from the dragon-boy, but she didn't have many other options and her knee was acting out again.

"Okay, yoo know what tah do, girl. It'll be fine. He said he won't hurt yoo." Astrid reassured herself. Things would be all right. Even if she was putting herself in what could turn out to be a dangerous situation at least no one she cared about would see her doing this stupid stunt.

Astrid trailed behind the paw prints that led her to the starry night sky. The bad news was that she entered the courtyard instead of being truly outside as the other part of her brain still desired to escape. She mentally whacked her head for still thinking those thoughts and put her attention in front of her viewpoint.

For a few minutes, it took a while before Astrid could see anything but it was less time when she started to hear something quiteâ€¦ strange. It sounded a lot like growls and croons, mostly growling, being exchanged with two creatures. From what she gathered, it appeared to be the two of them were in the middle of an argument.

\*\*"Yow isna globbla di Missy \*\*(You will not eat the girl)\*\*."\*\*

Astrid shook her head in disbelief at what she was hearing. Somehow the animal she heard speaking sounded quite a lot like Hiccup.

The next voice she heard was distinguishably deeper in range and tone. It was also male but appeared to be in disagreement in what the former was speaking.

\*\*"Toothless snotta com di Missy inna Hiccup-gaff \*\*(I do not like the girl inside Hiccup's home)\*\*(2)\*\*\*\*. Me woz solo tickling ere \*\*(I was only joking before)\*\*."\*\*

Astrid stared in wide-eyed fascination over what he said or chirped.



Hiccup and the other dragon did sound like they were talking in another language that it seemed solitary in only the flying reptiles understood.

\*\*\*"Issa fix-not ear-wig com un tickli di Hiccup \*\*"(It didn't sound like a joke to me)\*\*\*"

Through the shadows, Astrid watched the two figures circling each other animalistically. Both of them seemed ready to do something crazy until the larger dragon with the deeper growls paused. His glowing green eyes blinked owlshly in the dark, landing right where the girl stood, much to her shock and worry.

The large dragon bobbed his head up and down coughing out rumbles in the back of his throat that suspiciously sounded like laughter?

\*\*\*"Ah, splishjug, is goggless com ussa issna lon. ta's min Missy inna wessa \*\*"(Well, my friend it would seem we're not alone. Your little girl is here with us)\*\*\*"

\*\*\*"Questa to,"\*\*\* he trailed off once he too turned his head and saw Astrid finally. He comically cried out in alarm, no longer in his dramatic crouching pose but fell to the ground with a noticeable thump.

Astrid raised an eyebrow and her lip curled at one side. Why was she afraid of this guy? With slight awareness, she walked forward never keeping her eyes off either dragon. The deep-voiced dragon narrowed his eyes with caution but did not show any attempts to make sudden movements. His long wings were spread out for balance and possibly trying to come across as a bigger animal than he was already. Hiccup finally picked himself from his stumble, seamlessly standing between the girl and the dragon. His arms were raised between the two trying to act as a buffer. Astrid wasn't sure who he was protecting, her or the bigger dragon? She did find the gesture a bit tender in an unusual way.

"I didn't come here to fight yoo," Astrid insisted.

"Not to sound rude, but I'm not all that worried of you getting aggressive."

Ah, so he was concerned for her safety after all. Astrid bit her lip, unsure of this new development until remembering what she came for. Slowly she went for her bag, removing it off her shoulders before putting it in front of her and then carefully unzipping a pocket before bringing to light what she had carried.

The stuffed dragon toy.

Right on cue Hiccup's eyes swelled with familiarity toward the little dragon, dropping his arms in the process. He, on impulse, moved forward but halted abruptly recoiling his hands away while looking directly at Astrid. She rolled her eyes, took a step forward and held the toy even further toward Hiccup. Never once taking his eyes off of hers the dragon-boy stretched his arms far enough, opening the palms in a human-like manner, expecting her to drop the toy. When reading his signals, Astrid let go of the stuffed dragon, allowing it to fall into his hands-erm-paws.

"Oh, this's uh-mine. Yes **\*\*mine\*\***." He cradled the dragon, staring at it in adoration and great relief. "I thought I lost it a fortnight ago." His soft expression quickly turned into a stricken demeanor. "This was in my bedchamber, wasn't it?"

Astrid nodded, very unnerved by what she was seeing. His nervousness looked so odd when it projected from the face she was terrified less than an hour ago.

"Oh, gods you were in my room." Realization struck the dragon-boy hard as he winced and started to cower in front of Astrid. "Valkyrie if you saw anything in there that offended you-"

"Other than a portrait of me?" She offered; her arms crossed though secretly she was not mad in the least bit.

"Yes other than a portrait of **\*\*that\*\***," it took him a moment later to catch up to what Astrid said and, as much as she didn't wish to admit it, he held a shocked expression that made him look more humorous instead of frightening. She did her hardest to keep her mouth from cracking. He was starting to appear more human to her regardless of his scaled body. It was then she decided to bring out her secret weapon; the somewhat wrinkled drawn depiction her face.

Astrid never thought it was possible before, but Hiccup dropped his jaw further than a normal human could do (of course he didn't have a small jaw as a dragon so that may have been the reason). He started sputtering something nonsensical that Astrid deciphered as personal embarrassment and a quick apology. She was ready to snigger at the sight, but someone else already beat her to it. The larger black dragon shook all over, trilling with his familiar cough-laugh. The beast continued for another few moments until it seemed that he became aware of his surroundings and returned to his previous behavior of leering at Astrid.

Hiccup barked at the other in that language Astrid still didn't understand. Dragon-boy and dragon shared a glance between themselves almost like they were reading the other's thoughts. Which was probably the case when Hiccup turned his attention back toward the blonde and said, "I think it would be best for you to leave shortly. I am afraid that your presence is making him unnerved."

"I make him unnerved?" Astrid raised a brow, incredulous. Her eyes squinted for a moment when she realized that the black dragon was being referred to as a male. "Who is him?"

Hiccup's mouth bended up words into another sheepish smile. His little fangs were showing again, but Astrid tried not to make much of a fuss over them as he started introducing her to the larger dragon.

"All right, Valkyrie this is Toothless," he gestured rather sweetly of the dragon. The dragon on the other hand did not share his feelings. Hiccup noticed 'Toothless'' aggression and glared at him softly before continuing. "Toothless this is-"

"Astrid," she threw in without a beat.

"Right Astrid who is actually," he trailed off, his eyes and mouth rounded dumbfounding.

She shrugged, avoiding his gaze. It didn't really matter to her anymore about keeping secrets if it was something as simple as her real name.

"My name is Astrid Hofferson," she added to get her point across even more.

Her mind wandered back to the name Hiccup gave to the black dragon and spoke up before he could.

"Yoo named a dragon, Tooth\_less\_?" She could clearly see the dragon with two rows of sharp white teeth. Somehow Toothless didn't like the tone she was using and surly growled at her bearing his evident teeth almost as if he was mocking.

Hiccup lowered his head; the black head plates matched his posture. He gently patted the quadrupedal lizard by his snout in order to calm him down.

"Toothless tends to get sensitive about what others say around him. Believe me, I know."

Astrid nodded hoping that agreeing with Hiccup would help improve the other dragon's dour mood.

"Yoo can talk to him right?" Astrid inquired with her fingers fidgeting over her portrait subconsciously.

Hiccup sighed before giving a nod. "Yes, I can communicate with dragons. I have picked up on the ability for a while now Miss Hofferson."

"Astrid," she interrupted him on impulse. He stared at her with blinking eyes making her unsettled. She further explained, "Nobody calls me Miss Hofferson. Not even mah dad says that when I get in trouble."

He nodded once again but this time in understanding. "Of course, Astrid," he spoke in a way that sounded like he was testing out the name. She didn't feel comfortable about the way he said her name. Probably because she was so used to him calling her Valkyrie all the time.

The dragon-boy drew his attention to the ground while absentmindedly stroking Toothless' head spines. "It wasn't that hard to learn, speaking Dragonese I mean when you're partially a dragon yourself."

"I don't remember ever seeing you like this before," Astrid pointed out.

Hiccup breathed out a shaky sigh. "I only take the form of a dragon when the sun goes down, and then I return back to my human self when the sun rises the next day."

"But why?"

"It's a wicked spell that a witch placed on me before I was born." Hiccup declared, almost too casually.

"A witch?" Astrid repeated, trying to wrap her head around the idea of something as fantastical as a witch being real.

Hiccup nodded before removing his paw off of Toothless' head and paced off toward a wall where flowers Astrid could not see in the dark clung to the stone like ivy. His claws brushed delicately over a flower bud; his face turned away from Astrid leaving her to guess what emotions he wore.

"A long time ago my father made the mistake of killing the witch's son. He did not realize the error before it was too late. The witch swore she would make it so that I, the unborn son, would never have a life. My father thought it meant that I would die as a stillborn or that the witch could attempt to kill me on the day of my birth, but no one saw it coming that I was indeed born. Prematurely, but I was brought into the world."

"Then how could the witch's curse take your life if you lived?"

"That is where the tricky part came in," Hiccup turned around, facing Astrid and Toothless. "The life that the witch took from me wasn't meant to be literal but figuratively speaking. I have never had the life of a customary human boy because every night I was forced to transform into this, this— What you see before you right now." He sighed sadly, accepting the defeat in his hopeless existence.

Astrid half-lidded her eyes in consideration. What she had listened to did make a lot of sense though it was the very opposite of her original idea. Another question soon came into her mind. The one that had plagued her heart and soul since she was in the tower.

"How did your parents react to it?"

Hiccup gave her a thin smile, hunching his back while staring fondly at the toy in his paws. "I don't believe they ever told me how they originally acted at the prospect of having a cursed son, but they did everything they could to try and find me a cure. Unfortunately nothing ever came out of it, but I do appreciate sacrifices they made for me.

"The curse never said that if they had another child he or she would end up as I have but they never had another, and they most certainly did not try to get rid of me either. They still loved me and tried hard as they could for me to have a happy life. I had everything I could ever wish for all except what I really wanted; to be free and never look back."

Astrid lowered her gaze at the same time he did. His answer did not necessarily help with explaining why he was living in an abandoned castle with a dragon that looked just like him, save of course for his hair and choice to stand upright as if he were still human. She wanted to press on why he was in the castle and if his parents left him but chose not to after seeing his dismal look. She couldn't remember the last time someone had stunned her the way Hiccup's story did. She was absolutely speechless.

"You do promise not to tell anyone about this, right?" Hiccup pleaded all the while drawing himself forward to where Astrid stood.

"Because I would wish for there not to be any angry mobs coming towards the castle. Or not have then carry any pitchforks or torches. Oh Lord and Odin forbid any of them bringing torches here."

The stammering was threatening to return until Astrid raised her hand to quell the spellbound boy's uneasy disposition. She also wanted him to cease his progressing movements toward her.

"No, don't worry no one is going to be bringing any towards his here anytime soon. It's gonna be okay. I won't tell anyone."

"Do you really mean that?" the cursed youth asked with hopeful doe eyes.

"I said no one would believe me otherwise, but yes I won't tell anyone about you or yourâ€¦. about a person living here." Astrid finished lamely.

Somehow the air of this promise did not weigh Astrid down like the last one she made with 'Hermit\*\*' \*\*did but instead filled her with a sense of privilege. Hiccup had trusted something that both of them knew was of great importance. She would make sure to honor the commitment and not say a word of what happened that night to anyone. Especially Ruffnut.

"So this means I can go back home?" she asked carefully but carried a small grin.

Hiccup grinned in return and nodded. "Yes, I think that would suffice." He lifted his head up when he looked down at her left leg. "But not with that injury of yours."

Astrid rolled her eyes before placing her hands onto her hips; the paper laid forgotten on the grass. "Then what do you suggest we do?"

The boy pondered for a minute or two with a paw underneath his chin. And lifted the toy dragon up-and-down as though he were weighing it and then his eyes drifted toward where Toothless sat.

Seconds later his eyes widened when an idea struck his mind. "I got it. How about you climb on Toothless' back, and he can fly you-"

"No," Astrid answered bluntly.

"But it will be fast and-"

"No."

"You won't have to-"

"No."

Hiccup stared blankly at her, preparing to open his mouth-

"No!"

"I didn't even say anything yet," Hiccup whined, his shoulders drooping.

"I am not flying on anyone today." Astrid emphasized as she crossed her arms and determination. "Besides it's not **that** **far** of a walk from here to mah house."

"Well, it's far enough that the cut on your leg will only worsen if you use your injured leg."

Astrid puffed out her cheeks in annoyance while having a bit more trouble in figuring out an alternative to Hiccup's suggestion. As she could give faith to Hiccup it not in any way meant she was ready to trust the non-English speaking dragon. She would rather have Snotlout carry than anything else. In that mere moment, a plan struck her mind.

"Actually I think have a better idea."

\* \* \*

><p>"If I may make a remark this feels rather awkward." What Hiccup had just uttered was an understatement in his account. He wished that Valk-Astrid had come up with a cleverer proposal instead of what he was being subjugated to at that moment. Her idea one was that she would indeed get on the back of a dragon, but she did not say *which* dragon. Oh no, she was far too brilliant to think of mounting Toothless, she instead had Hiccup force himself to play pony and carried her to her desired destination. He strode behind alleyways and other obscure locations in order not to be spotted by the people returning from a long day of work. For every minute that passed more and more of what little dignity Hiccup had left slowly began to wither away.

"Aye. It does," Astrid, agreed behind him though he could hear her smirking at his misfortune, "but less talking and more walking."

"As you wish, my lady." Hiccup said sardonically with a roll from his eyes.

**"We could've just scared her back into the tower but no~ you had to play noble gentle-dragon and allow her to straddle your back like a mother with her flightless hatchling. Or better yet a pony! Don't you remember that from before, eh?"** **It had been a great surprise to Hiccup when Toothless volunteered by coming with them. He too did not fly though Hiccup noted that the Night Fury wished otherwise. But the cursed dragon appreciated the thoughtful companionship all the same.**

"If Toothless doesn't like me that much then why is he following us?" Astrid asked a little while later as the stars began to flicker to life up above.

"He's purposely following me, he is overprotective towards my well-being." Hiccup replied to the best of his abilities.

"I've noticed."

He was unsure if she was derisive again or not so he decided to remain the vigilant to his surroundings. Similar to the very infamous night weeks before, everything seemed reticent along the quarter with streetlamps automatically lighting up to join the stars in illuminating the heavens. Astrid appeared to be entertaining herself with brushing her thumb over the rug that rested between her and Hiccup's dragon spines. The rug was something borrowed from the old cellar in order for Astrid to lie safely without pressing against the spikes on Hiccup's back. For one moment, her hand relaxed on his head for barely a second when she withdrew it away. She behaved as though his skull was a scalding potato.

"What happened to that bump I gave ya on yer head?" Astrid asked in an attempt to alleviate the situation. "Did it swell down after a while?"

"That? No it didn't." Hiccup had all but forgotten of the incident when Astrid assaulted him with her metal pole. "Whenever I've become hurt from a bruise it usually goes away after the Transformation occurs. So the injury I sustained from you banished once sunset on that day came to pass."

Astrid remained silent for a moment possibly to gather up her thoughts and then declared, "Yoo know fer someone that's usually a beanpole yer pretty strong as a dragon."

"Thanks, I suppose." Hiccup was even more uncertain if that was meant to be taken as a compliment. "My hypotheses is that when I go through the Transformation I gain this physique so I won't get weary from carrying my wings and tail all night."

"Can yoo fly with yer wings?" she asked, intrigued.

"Of course. I have done so in the past, not that I am to be prideful about it."

"Oh, do it, go ahead and be prideful." Astrid chimed goodheartedly. She might have been trying to lighten the mood in her unorthodox way.

"Well, I guess you can say I can fly decently with the fair winds." Hiccup admitted with a slight chuckle. Toothless merely rolled his eyes but spoke nothing.

"Must be nice. I wish I could fly so I can leave this rock of an island fer once." Astrid spoke witlessly; her voice hinted with longing.

"What, why would you want to do that? Isn't this island your home?" Hiccup may have dreamt of leaving the castle on the occasion, but he did not wish to leave the island for good. His father always told them that a man should take pride in the place he called home.

"Yeah, but do yoo see any universities around fer me to go to?"

Hiccup furrowed his scaly brows but shook his head in reluctant understanding. "No."

"Not only that but I want tah see the rest of the world too and make something of myself than being the daughter of a bait shop owner." She sighed bitterly.

"But that sounds like it is beneficial toward the fishing community." Hiccup pointed out, finding the girl's words more confusing by each passing.

"Hiccup, if it weren't fer the fact that yoo're carrying me I'd already punch yer arm by now."

"Sorry, I was just stating a fact." Hiccup apologized. It was probably for the best that he didn't discuss more about womanly occupations. He had a growing belief that the stations women were assigned to back when he was younger may have altered slightly in the past few hundred years.

"A fact that's pretty dated. I can do whatever I want once I'm old enough and get good grades."

Ah, so he was correct about his previous reflection.

"Like the ones you're getting in your English lessons?" Hiccup quipped sadly letting his mouth runaway from him once more.

"Sass, Hiccup." she said, threatening him with a clasped hand.

"I apologize."

\*\*\*"Are we there yet?" \*\*Toothless asked his patience wearing thin. Hiccup inwardly sighed but did not directly answer his friend. When they turned a street corner, the three were greeted with the familiar sight of Astrid's home he had only seen once before. He crouched to the ground so that Astrid could dismount easier.

"We have arrived at your humble abode." Hiccup announced wittily. Astrid yawned, obviously tired from that day's events, and then slid down from his back. Both of them stood apart from each other unsure of who would break the silence starting to form.

In a very unexpected gesture, Astrid lifted her arm and cuffed his shoulder much to his surprise. "Oww!" Hiccup was both startled and astounded of the actual pain he felt from that blow.

"That was fer holding me hostage." Astrid supplied modestly with a small shrug from her shoulders.

"Right, sure, let's call it that." Hiccup deadpanned as he rubbed his shoulder to ease the little bruise he would most certainly get in the morning. He stared over at where Toothless was and he in turn jerked his head away grumbled something along the lines of, \*\*\*"this is your problem, not mine."\*\*

"â€¦.Thanks." Hiccup heard Astrid whisper softly.

His gaze toward her was filled with confusion, so he dared to naively ask, "For holding you hostage?"

"That and ferâ€¦" Astrid trailed off until she gave him a half-smile and finished, "Everything else."



He wasn't assured of what she meant with 'everything else' but he welcomed the more gentle Astrid compared with the ferocious Valkyrie an hour ago. He watched her limp forward to her gate, then shutting it before reaching the porch. She turned around once looking at him with concern. Or perhaps awareness of the fact she did not properly say farewell to him finally crossed her mind.

"Yoo do know how tah get back right?"

Her question startled him from his thoughts. "Wha-pha-yes! I mean \_yes\_. This isn't the first time I left the castle, you know." Hiccup feigned a moan but did not hide the growing smile on his face.

"Yeah, what was I thinking?" she asked aloud clearly holding the same standpoint as he did. Without another word, Astrid strayed herself from Hiccup's attendance and retried to her home. She muttered a quick, "Bye," as though she had finally remembered to say that word.

She closed the door soon afterwards.

"Good bye, Astrid," Hiccup whispered, his arm still framing a shoulder. He had a far off look on his face, and he smiled merrily at the notion that he had found what he had been waiting for all of his life.

\*\*\*"So is hitting another person's arm a sign of affection for humans?" \*\*

Like many times before, the nosy dragon broke Hiccup from his thoughts.

\*\*\*\*\*"No,"\*\* he shook his head, trying to reaffirm his rebuttal in spite of his reddened face. And it was left unclear as to why his skin became warm. He thanked every possible god for the cloak of nighttime surrounding the two dragons. \*\*\*"It's probably her idea of communicating." \*\*

It sounded more logical than any other explanation he could come up with from the top of his head.

\*\*\*"Hmph, females."\*\*

\*\*\*"You said it," \*\*Hiccup decided he did not wish to argue with Toothless that evening and agreed with him for the sake of disagreeing. Hiccup wrapped the rug around his arm in a tight knot with no intentions of walking home tonight. He and Toothless spread their wings and in seconds they flew away back to the castle where they claimed it as home.

When Hiccup felt the cool air blow over his auburn locks his mind returned back to what he was thinking about before the other Night Fury interrupted him. He thought of how happy it made him know that there was someone out there that he could indeed place his trust. Yes, Astrid was finally the fresh breath of air he did not have in a long time.

Hiccup had now truly made friends with a human.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Can you believe that I just wrote that? Almost twenty pages. That's the most I've written for this story and something tells me I might be doing it again. XP Oh well I hope you're all happy with the result.

bawheed\*\* â€"\*\*\* empty-headed, an idiot. (I might've explained this one already but you all might've forgotten it by this point, like me. XD)

Dragons do not live in the same conventional houses as humans do. While there is a word for house in Dragonese (\_\*\*Hoosus\*\*\_), for this story I decided to create my own verbalization, \_\*\*Hiccup-gaff\*\*\_, it's the dialect of Hiccup referred in the third person and \_\*\*gaff\*\*\_ stands for nest. It's a formal and finalization of calling the name of the significant home belonging to a dragon. Toothless views Haddock castle as Hiccup's nest because he was born in the place and states that it's his territory and no one should enter without Hiccup's permission. Dragons hardly land anywhere that they know for sure they can go on unless another dragon lives there. If that were the case the newcomer would either fly away to some other place or fight the dragon for the right to land. It's a minor reason Toothless disapproved of Astrid barging in since he never heard if she asked to come inside without challenging the boy.

Now to explain the unusual change in Astrid's behavior when she saw Hiccup's toy (which is totally based on the one from the t.v. show by the way. Spoilers in case no one has seen it yet, sorry). It's a bit of a soft spot she has but Astrid does care for families that do love each other, especially the relationships between mother and child-something that will be explored later on, trust me-and she could see Hiccup not as a monster but a being who at one point must've had a loving mother until something terrible had struck him. And for now she thinks it has something to do with his curse but we'll look into that later.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 16. Summer Is Over

\*\*Q-A: \*\*You know what I love about all of you HTTYD fans? That you're very supportive and fun! We've reached over 120 reviews and I want to see that going higher next time. I'm not sure if it'll be 125 or 130 but I do want to see more of you guys saying what you think about this chapter and all the more along the way. I hope to probably make a growing series out of this someday.

\*\*Disclaimer: \*\*Nothing is mine. Blah, blah, blah. Cressida Cowell is responsible for the awesomeness that is HTTYD and everybody should know it by now.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Summer Is Over<strong>

August 31, 2010 (Berkenshire Secondary School)~

A slamming locker resonating went unnoticed from the dozens of student bodies walking down the hallway. The locker's holder carried her usual look of indifference toward the populace while her mind was telling a different story. She couldn't believe how feeble she acted the other night. Two parts of her head had screamed in a mental civil war both insisting they were right, and the other was wrong.

One does not simply accept a boy-dragon's claim to beingâ€¦. Afflicted by a curse done by a witch. It could not, would not, be the reason Astrid wasn't going to allow that to be true. Her half-arsed mutant theory made more sense than a witch hexing a baby for God's sake! Astrid was going to get to the bottom of this once and for all.

\_Wait a minute. Hold up, \_the blonde did not cease walking but her brain's thought processing did falter just a bit. Why was she getting so concerned over with something that was clearly way over her head? Astrid couldn't see herself as a savior of some-sorts, especially to a boy who was far too trusting for his own good. Why did it all suddenly become her concern if there was a curse or not? Magic was supposed to be make-believe and yet so was dragons. She had only witnessed both of those sights less than twelve hours ago, right?

Astrid shook her head. She could accept there are dragons if she tried looking at it in a scientific perspective. There was no proof against dragons existing, but she could still try and find out if there could be a cure for Hiccup's â€¦. \_Condition\_.

She sighed the blonde knew that no matter how many times she didn't want to admit it but one way, or another she felt responsible for him. He was abandoned by his family (maybe) left with only a dragon for company. And yet he still found the compassion to help others even if his parents (probably) did not. Her leg would've been in a far worse state than it was then.

(Erik Hofferson didn't see the cut as he had come home later than Astrid after a long workday. She took extra precautions earlier the next morning wearing black leggings thick enough to hide the cotton padding. She told her father that it was getting cold and needed the extra clothing for insulation against the weather.)

And he, Hiccup, did carry her back to her house the way she asked him. Despite a few objections coming from him \*\*and \*\*apparently his dragon too, the walk proceeded without a hitch. It had also become apparent during that time Hiccup was surprisingly easy to talk to. Sure she wasn't going to be spilling her secrets to him-though he seemed perfectly fine telling his-but to say she was bored during the 'pony' ride would've been a lie. That was the source for her involuntary need to help find a cure, Astrid decided at last. The island wouldn't notice the boy's absence if he died, but she sure would and seeing how he was the first sensible conversation she had in ages did mean something to her. Yep, that was the reason she wanted to do this. Astrid formulated the rest of her plan when she entered her first class of the day.

\* \* \*

><p>"Fishlegs," Astrid muttered towards the bulky teen sitting a row before her own. Study period was a class she learned too late that

she didn't necessarily need, but found no chance of transferring due to it being a mandatory course. With being the single-minded teenager she was, Astrid always made sure her class work had been completed long before their due dates. That left her with almost nothing to do during the timeframe, much to her misfortune. But today Astrid found something to occupy her time, even if it denoted for her to talk with someone as mouthy as Fishlegs.<p>

When whispering his name got no response Astrid opted to try once more but also flicked his ear for good measure. Much to her relief Fishlegs responded with a small yelp and turned his head around, staring directly at the frowning girl. He swallowed, whether it was from fear or serendipity Astrid didn't care.

She decided not to waste precious time and got straight to the point.

"I want to ask yoo about skin conditions people suffer from and any known cures fer it."

Fishlegs rightfully gaped at her, unaware of the fact that he was looking like half of his namesake.

"It's fer a project I'm doing."

"Fer what? Chemistry? I don't remember Professor Mildew assigning us to-"

"It's fer extra credit," Astrid interrupted in a hushed whisper. She saw that he would have opened his knapsack to his Chem. notes but the blonde was not going to have that.

Fishlegs seemed to understand with his notepaper settled back in his bag. "But wouldn't it make more sense fer yoo to find the information on yer own?"

Astrid held back a sigh. She should've gone with the fake sob story of her cousin's friend from Cork suffering from some epidermis illness that no doctor could place. Since Astrid walked herself into a corner, she had to come up with an explanation of sorts. Even though she knew Fishlegs was the last person to go spreading gossip on purpose, he still would confess under a death threat, something of which she wasn't in the mood to use on him.

"I want another opinion fer the work," Astrid fibbed but never lost eye contact with him. "Since the rest of our group are a bit," she gestured with her fingers gesturing wildly. She was indicating how the others weren't exactly on par with the two of them—except maybe Heather, but her grades were average at best compared to what Astrid and Fishlegs could do. Cami was always excluded since she was still a year below them.

"Yeah," Fishlegs agreed with a shoulder shrug. "I suppose that makes more sense."

"So do yoo think yoo can give me an extra hand? Please." Astrid curled a smile unsure of what else to say until she thought of adding please moments later.

Fishlegs ended gaping bigger than the last.

"What?" Astrid arched an eyebrow before pushing her arms and body back to an upright position.

"It's just-I-erm-I can't remember the last time yoo ever said please to me. Or to anyone fer that matter."

"Would yoo rather I be mah usual aggressive behavior?" she challenged.

"No-nope. The way yoo are now is excellent. More than excellent."

Satisfied with that reply Astrid sat back on her chair while crossing her arms.

"When is the extra credit due?"

Astrid stiffened if only for a second but stayed composed. "Uh, sometime by the end of tomorrow."

"Oh, well I should probably get some notes on the subject so I may compare them with yers soon."

"Very soon," Astrid affirmed with a nod.

\* \* \*

><p>The study class ended the same way it started; uneventful and boring. Astrid was eager to leave and moved along with the same pace as her classmates. She headed straight for her locker to take out the chemistry book she would need for her real assignment. Once she internally recited her locker combination from memory the Hofferson girl opened the small door.<p>

Only to see something wrong. Very wrong.

"Where is it," Astrid pushed her hands as far as they could go reaching for any possible space she hadn't touched. She remembered specifically where it was placed. Every corner searched but no signs of her lost item. Panic rose, and breathing became hitched. She stared with wide eyes in disbelief, but she could not deny what was in front of her, or wasn't in front of her.

The Book of Dragons was gone.

Astrid couldn't understand how it happened. She kept the book either on herself or safely stowed away under lock and key. There had to be mistake, but there was none. She quickly berated herself. How could she have let this happen? She never misplaced a book before, especially one as important as the dragon book. Even when she didn't believe in magic curses she still felt the book could have been her only source to dragon knowledge. It was probably bad for her to recollect that the book was a loan from the public library. God, Tantrum was going to throw a hissy fit when she found out.

Astrid grabbed her textbook and for a second time that day she slammed her locker shut. She left even more of a mark on the metal box than whoever broke into it.

"Hold the phone." Astrid narrowed her eyes in deep thought. Her fingers grazed over the metal seeing no scrapes or dents. The thief had been able to break into her locker, taking a book that barely anybody else knew existed, and was able to do it all without other people from seeing the whole event. A person who knew her combo used it in order to get in her locker. It led to even more questions for Astrid.

Six other people knew how to get into her locker. All of them were her mates.

At the beginning of First Year, four years ago, the group came together well aware of one fact. They were assigned classes in the opposite directions of where their lockers were stationed. In order to combat against the threat that was getting detention from absences, they combined their resources and shared the lockers so they could have their work closer to their lessons. Back then it seemed like a good idea but now Astrid wasn't so sure.

She would never believe any of her mates to do such a thing. They couldn't. They wouldn't. Astrid was ready to scream out her frustrations when the warning bell rang.

While hurrying along she analyzed that none of her mates did such a crime. They were her mates. Cami' might've been a kleptomaniac, but she was trying to get over it (read trying). The twins hated reading and shared the same passion with Snotlout. Heather and Fishlegs were the only few people she knew that openly enjoyed reading but they were both far too good and nice to steal a book. She saw the signs back when they all went to the public library. Right, she was just being paranoid again. Astrid decided that before having lunch she would head to the front office and tell the people there about the theft. It was about time some of the proper authorities handled something instead of her. The fewer problems she had to deal with the better.

With seconds to spare, the blonde made it to her chemistry lesson on time.

\* \* \*

><p>Lunch was once again located inside as a spell of light rain fell overhead. Astrid knew that everyone knew that a little rain never harmed anyone; the school administrators were not going to have any of that hooligan nonsense. It didn't seem to cross their mind that the students were descendants of sea-faring Vikings and that most of them spent more time at the fish market during typhoon season than any other. But clearly health protection weighed over the obvious logic.<p>

Astrid spied Cami' sitting next to her and noticed that the shorter blonde was holding a strong grip against the board. She wasn't sure who to feel more sympathetic for, the cabin fevering Cami' or the table?

"Hey Astrid," Snotlout spoke over from across the table. Against her better judgment Astrid gave him her full attention.

"I heard about what happened to yer locker, sorry."

Astrid blinked. She had no idea 'Lout could be so caring.

"But none of my stuff was taken from there right?"

And then it was gone.

The rest of the group gave their condolences too, albeit in sincerer ways (Tuff asked if his stuff was safe too and his sister whacked his head for good measure). Everyone asked if she lost anything valuable but Astrid shook her head, unsure about bringing up the dragon book.

"Does anybody know where Heather is?" Tuffnut asked suddenly. "She said she'd help me out with my maths work."

"I think she'll need to do a lot more than help." Ruffnut remarked snidely.

"I'm not stupid."

"Yoo are too."

"Am not."

"Are too," his twin sister said. "Yoo still like banging yer head over a wall."

"So do yoo."

"Oh yeah," Ruff' sighed with a gleam in her eye. "Hey, Tuff~ I just figured what we're going tah do after school."

"So does anyone else know where Heather is," Astrid inquired toward the others.

"Nope." Cami' shrugged her shoulders.

"She has lunch with us, but she's not here." Fishlegs pointed out in concern.

"Well, that's because she's speaking with the headmaster of course." Snotlout answered while examining his nails.

All eyes stared at Snotlout in shock and pure amazement. He was keeping that information all to himself until then becauseâ€|?

"What? That's what is happening. I saw her going in there earlier."

"Do yoo think she might be questioned about the castle break in?" Fishlegs gasped. He quickly took out his puffer and inhaled the needed medication.

Astrid shared a blank look with most of the others. "I'm sure no one's going tah find out."

"But-

"Fishlegs," she stared him down while being sincere as possible

despite how unsettled she was feeling. "No one is going tah find out and what I did was fer a good cause. I got the bashyball back let's leave it at that."

"Hey, that kinda rhymes." Ruff' chimed in amusement.

"No harm, no foul. The adults will ferget this whole thing in a few months until some idiot does something else." Astrid wondered if she was saying that to calm Fishlegs down or herself.

The rest of the lunch period went without much notice until the bell rang. Students shuffled in crowds to their next classes as Astrid and her gang found them in Gobber's classroom. She wanted to hit herself for failing to remember about her book report. She now needed a new subject to research.

All hope seemed lost until Astrid felt a metallic hook brush gently over her shoulder. She turned her head to see Gobber motioning with his good finger over to his desk. While hiding away her nervousness, she followed him back to the front of the room.

"I'm allowin' fer yoo tah have some more time tah work on yer report."

Astrid couldn't believe what she was hearing. "What?" she said in disbelief.

"The office called and told me about the theft. What rotten luck fer something so surprising tah hear that happen. Yoo will have an extension on time fer yoo to get a new book and start the project all over. Do yoo think yoo can do that?"

"Uh, yeah sure I can."

Gobber sighed before pinching the bridge of his nose. "Well, that leaves one less thing on mah plate."

"Yoo look tired." Astrid titled her head at her favorite teacher. She rarely was sympathetic toward people, but the two-stumped man was someone she knew personally and considered his words to be listened and respected.

"I am tired lass," Gobber said. "It's just some stress an' all be grateful yoo still have yer youth."

Astrid shook her head. "No, it's more than that, isn't it?"

Gobber contemplated for a moment before leaning forward as far as his desk would allow him to, and Astrid followed his example.

"What I'm about tah talk about does not leave this conversation, alrigh'?"

Astrid nodded.

"I gonna call around mah lunch break from an old student of mine. And she told me that she had a wee bit of a problem at where she was working."

"What kind of a problem?" Astrid whispered.



"She got fired."

"Who," Astrid had a good feeling to which it may have been, but she still wanted a straight answer.

With another sigh Gobber answered, "Tantrum O'UGerly."

Astrid felt her insides grow cold.

"How," she tread carefully over the deep end. "How did she lose her job at the library?"

Gobber rubbed his stubble beard in thought. "It had tah do with misuse of following the rules. I think she said they accused her fer allowing access to the restricted section but that can't be true." He waved it off with a chuckle. "No one would do something like that."

"Just as someone wouldn't go inside the castle?"

The English teacher stiffened for a minute until he gave Astrid a hard look and pointed one of his sausage-like fingers at her. "Whoever those troublemakers were-" \_What is with the adults and their fascination with that word?\_" They along with everyone else should know that the castle is off limits fer a reason. I was never allowed to go up there when I was a lad. Neither did my father or his father, or even my great granddad. It has been that way fer a long time. And it's fer the best."

"Who would come up with a rule like that?"

Gobber shrugged. "Possibly the SkÃ¶lls. They've been the head clan fer ages now."

"Of course." She should've known dogs like the SkÃ¶lls passed an unreasonable law.

"Ug won't be too happy about Tanny losing her job." Gobber added.

Astrid silently agreed. She was not happy at all.

After that little talk Gobber sent Astrid back to her desk where her mates were waiting curiously.

"What did he want tah talk to yoo about?" Ruff' was the first to ask.

"Nothing. Nothing important." She said it in a way that made it clear the subject was to be dropped.

For the remainder of the class Astrid, for the first time in her life, could not pay attention to the lecture.

\* \* \*

><p>The bell rang for the final class that day with Astrid bumping into Fishlegs by accident.<p>

"Sorry," she quickly muttered under her breath while picking up her pencils and notebook paper.

"Another apology from yoo?" the blond haired boy said with exclamation. "Yoo didn't lose a bet with the twins have yoo?"

"Why is it so bad fer me to be decent every once in a while?"

"I never said it was," Fishlegs defended quickly. "I just hadn'tâ€|"

"Hadn't what?"

"I just remembered the research I found."

"Fer?"

"Fer yer extra credit. Yoo know the thing yoo needed, even though skin has nothing to do with chemicals unless you come in contact with it." Fishlegs answered bashfully.

"Oh, yeah right that." Astrid almost forgot about her little accordance with Fishlegs. "So what did yoo find out?" She asked with earnest.

"Well, what I found were assessments over ailments caused by acne, rashes, skins cell discoloration, and something called \_Mermaid syndrome \_that said something about people with fused legs. There was also very interesting research article about cells that multiply so fast that people get more skin than they need, though that might have been another form of cancer-"

"But was there anything about how a person's skin can look scaly?" Astrid interjected.

Fishlegs blinked owlishly before reading over the packet he carried. "Uh, there is something called \_Ichthyosis vularis \_which is a skin disorder that gives the victim dry, fish scale-like skin. It only seems to be an inheritable disease and usually goes away as the person grows older or ends up getting so bad that they'll need medical treatment fast."

"Does it say anything about the disease affecting someone during a specific time of day? Or night?"

Fishlegs look at Astrid as if she had grown a second head, or scaly skin of her own. "I just said yoo get it from your parents if they had it too and might go away once puberty sets in or in later years. It just doesn't affect yoo at one time a day, it's fer as long as yoo have it unless yoo want tah get it treated."

"Right," Astrid lowered her head, trying to hide her embarrassment. Fishlegs was oblivious to her humiliation but keened with knowing there was something more to her presumed scrutiny.

"What kind of skin disorder did yoo have in mind fer exactly?"

Astrid mentally recalled all the hope she had in finding some cause and cure for her newfound \_acquaintance \_but now it was thrown away

in the dash. Hiccup asked her more than once to not let anyone know where he lived. Even if she left his name out and told Fishlegs about the supposed skin condition it would lead to the former asking more questions than she would like to answer.

Astrid was about to open her mouth until someone almost dive-bombed between her and Fishlegs. In a matter of seconds, a whirlwind blew past the two but quickly made a wild turn back. The blur turned out to be Camicazi, who stood before the older teenagers trying to catch her breath and her hands resting on her knees.

"I," a deep gasp was taken. "jus' heard that," another gulp of air, "Heather came back from talking with the headmaster."

"She's out?"

"Yoo 'eard me didn't ya?" Cami asked Fishlegs quizzically. Her arms placed on her hips. "I heard Snotlout who heard Tuff,' who heard his sister, spoke with Harriettahorse, who assists Mrs. Ack in the office-"

"And this is leading to-" Astrid twirled her wrist, motioning Cami to get on with it.

"They all said Heather is going tah leave from her little chat with the principal in five minutes. Not sure how they could possibly pin that to a tee but did."

"Then why are we still standing here fer?" Astrid exclaimed.

The two became three as they ventured off to where their other friends lied. At the other side of the school, the rest of the gang stood near the main entrance. There were no greetings exchanged, as everybody's attention was fixated on the door to Mr. Savage's office. None of them was sure of what would be in store but knew had to be there for Heather.

Tuffnut was the first to speak after a long span of silence. "So does anyone know if she's actually still in there or-"

The door to the headmaster's office opened revealing the two figures of Heather and Savage. Neither of them appeared to be cheerful from the questioning. The poor girl looked visibly shaken, and her usual pale skin was sickly. Astrid was taken back. What had the headmaster done to her?

"It would seem some of yer friends came to see you, Heather." Savage smiled crookedly at Astrid and the rest. He returned his attention back to Heather and whispered something sharply in her ear, with her wincing at every syllable. Astrid couldn't make out what he was saying until she shared a quick glance with Cami. She nodded once then leaned closer toward Astrid and began murmuring. The younger girl had a talent with reading lips.

"'I hope yoo took into consideration over what we were discussin' about young lady.'" the great Camicazi whispered directly into Astrid's ear. "'Do keep yer eyes peeled fer anything suspicious. Troublemakers need tah learn their lessons.'"

Astrid sucked on her lower lip but remained calm. Seconds later

Savage pushed Heather away from his door and closed it shut. The atmosphere from earlier returned, no one had the heart to speak up until Astrid found her composure and walked to where Heather stood. She crept forward placing a comforting hand over the black haired girl's shoulder.

"Are yoo okay?"

Heather appeared listless for a few moments before blinking back to reality. "Mmmâ€¦ what? Oh, yeah guys I'm fine." Heather smiled with one side only tugged up. She adjusted her book bag before continuing, "Been through the wringer a couple times in the past. No worries." Astrid tried not to flinch after Heather jerked away from her touch.

"That must've been tough, speaking with the headmaster." Snotlout pointed out, ignorant of Heather's body language was saying.

She pushed a few strayed hair bangs away and took a step back. "It's nothing. I'm fine guys."

Fishlegs stepped forward. "But are yoo sure-"

"I said I'm fine!" she snapped.

No one knew how to react. Heather was the most levelheaded person in the group. She never yelled at anyone, especially Fishlegs. Somehow she came to realize that too and bowed her head shamefully.

"Sorry, I-I need tah go." Heather hurried down the hall and straight for the doors. Not once did she look back toward Astrid or the gang. She was not even heading to the direction of the sports field but instead went toward the village.

"Yoo know," Ruffnut started as they headed out for gym class. All of them prepared for Gobber to call them useless scallops for being late again.

"I heard mum talking with Mrs. Larson about how Heather's farm might be dealin' with foreclosure." The female Thorston twin had gained everyone's attention

"Mrs. Larson reckoned the weather has been making the farm turnips get spoiled from all the rain."

\_Another reason to hate the weather here. \_Astrid thought bitterly. She had not spoken a word since Heather ran off. She was still speechless from the other girl's outburst. The blonde almost didn't feel Cami's presence next to her until the shorter girl tugged at her sleeves.

"Do ye think Heather might have tah move back to the mainland? Eh, Astrid?" the young Bog stared at the Hofferson girl with round eyes. Cami rarely showed raw emotion to anyone (especially the boys) but the idea of having to see a friend go away forever didn't sound good to the usually optimistic child.

Astrid was at a loss of words. Everything that she had hoped would go right didn't. At the beginning of the school year, she was once so sure things would go her way as they always did. And then they didn't

go as planned. It felt like everything she was building up was starting to crumble before her eyes.

"I don't know, Cami. I honestly don't know."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Bah-bum-BUM~! That was sure depressing and mysterious huh? Did any of this come to you as a shock? I know I was when I was coming up with this idea. I hope you all forgive me with how this one took a while to upload. My Internet for most of the week was shut down for some reason so I couldn't get this out sooner. But hopefully you're all okay about it. Things will be more cheery in the next chapter I promise. Also I bam'ed a \_Shrek \_reference in there if you noticed. XD

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 17. Take My Hand

\*\*Q-A: \*\*Whoa, when I asked for 130 reviews I didn't think I would get more than that. Wow. I love you all so much now. And I'm very intrigued by the reactions you all got from the last chapter. I will only say this, you will expect someone untrustworthy but not what the characters would suspect. ;)

Today's chapter song is \_Magic \_preformed by \_Stimulator. \_It's on the \_Ella Enchanted \_soundtrack most of which are basically famous songs remixed by bands and musicians popular around 10 years ago. Oh, the 2000's, how I miss those simple times.

\*\*Disclaimer: \*\*Nothing in this story is mine all except for the story itself. I do own that idea at least.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Take My Hand<strong>

August 31st, 2010 (Haddock castle, four and a half hours passed midday)~

Rain poured down upon the isle of Berkenshire as a demanding force striving to spread gloom in its wake. In spite of it one habitant inside Castle Haddock was enjoying the afternoon, regardless. Not even cleaning the muddy floors anew placed a damper on his mood. He had done what had once been thought impossible.

Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III found companionship with a human.

It wasn't an official proclamation and Hiccup did not wish to be overexcited but his heart pounded beneath the ribcage all the same. It probably helped him less with knowing that the human was, in fact, an adolescent girl. Oh, his parents above would either be disconcerted or flabbergasted by the new case of development.

Toothless meanwhileâ€¦|.

"\*\*Why did I ever agree to you sending that female to her nest?"

\*\*the dragon griped for what might have been the thousandth time that day.

\*\*\*One moment she was ready to kill you on sight and then the next she says to forget about it." \*\*He growled in frustration, head quavering in directions certainly impossible for a human vertebrate to imitate. \*\*"I don't like it something smellsâ€ and it's not the musty old room you just came out of."\*\*

For no other reason because he could Hiccup rolled his eyes at the dragon. But inwardly a part of his minded started to wonder.

Hiccup began recollecting how happy he had been when Miss Astrid (oh, how glad he was to know her name at last!) became willing to accept the hand of friendship with him. It was so sudden for her to trust him. He had presumed she would have never wanted anything to do with him after the horrible sight she seen only two days prior.

A feeling of dread found its way into his heart. Why did she make amends with him so quickly? Was it fear for her life and she was desperate to escape as soon as possible? Did she truly wish to apologize, but more that she felt pity for his monstrous form? The answer was much clearer to him now. Condolence deemed the most possible reason. She found his dragon form grotesque but allowed sympathy to cloud her judgment then.

Toothless' warnings became more and more pragmatic to Hiccup as he turned a corner and collided with an unseen force.

"Oww," Hiccup opened his eyes to the voice that was growing exceedingly familiar with each passing day. The weight that he rammed into belonged to none other than Miss Astrid. Approximating, she had landed on her â€|gluteus maximus as he did but was massaging her forehead something Hiccup recognized as he too began feeling his face throb from the sudden impact.

After realizing that profiling the girl was not helping Hiccup immediately brushed his trousers while standing up and quickly offered a hand for her.

"Well, aren't yoo a gentleman," she ruminated, choosing to push herself from the recently polished floor. Hiccup recoiled his hand, silently resolving to keep his disappointment in private.

"Since when did I ever show that I wasn't a gentleman?" Hiccup asked coolly. A glare from her led to him flinching, leading the ignored Toothless to growl warningly at Miss Astrid. Hiccup shot him a look of disapproval.

"I thought we were passed this stage in our relationship." she accused flummoxing Hiccup until she added, "Yoo know, the part where yer pet dragon won't eat me."

"I seem to recall you denying there ever was a relationship between us, Miss Astrid." Hiccup crossed his arms, feigning indifference when he was secretly enjoying the girl's reaction toward the Night Fury.

Somehow she may have sensed the imaginary tension from the cursed boy and slowly brought her bag to present it before the three of them.

Toothless' growling lessened slightly as he began to snuffle toward the bag. His eye-slits slowly started to round but narrowed once more when he studied something else on Miss Astrid's person.

"\*\*She's got a-\*\*\_needle-ler pointer-\_\*\*on her hip. I can smell the metal." \*\*

It thankfully was not difficult for Hiccup to decipher what a metallic \_needle-ler pointer \_was.

"Toothless thinks you have a weapon with you." Hiccup explained to the unsettled young lady.

Miss Astrid stared at him pointedly, almost as though he said something in a different language.

(On an entirely unrelated note, Hiccup would like you, dear readers to know that he \_\*\*did\*\*\_ know a few other languages. French and Latin he learned from his parents'-namely his mother's-tutelage and the aforementioned Dragonese. They have no real importance to the plot as of now, but he thought it would be good to know for future clarification)

"All I have with me is a knife tah gut out-"

"A knife is still a knife," he interjected, not caring for his manners at the moment. "And dragons know that knives can hurt or kill them. So if you value your life right now I would suggest removing it off of you as soon as possible."

Cautiously she brandished out the knife that was no longer than the width of her hand. Revealing the blade only made the dragon feel even more provoked, forcing Miss Astrid to drop it in haste. Much to the humans surprise Toothless did not seem pacified by the action. He jerked his head toward the girl's left with Hiccup squinting his eyes in thought.

"I think he wants you to push the knife further away."

"No kidding," she muttered sarcastically, though Hiccup did pick up a sense of appreciation laced in her tone. Elegantly the girl carefully lifted the knife above her left shoe and chucked it to the other side of the hall, the metal leaving an audible clang. In an instant, the Night Fury no longer held his distrustful demeanor and sat with his upper half still straight. Hiccup thought that Toothless look more like a young hound anxiously waiting for his dinner than a ferocious dragon.

Miss Astrid carried on where she left off and unbuckled her bag open with an odd device that somehow divided an opening but did not appear to slash. It was almost as though the tearing was intentional.

\*\* (1) \*\*

To the amazement of Hiccup and the suspected interest from Toothless, Miss Astrid revealed a large salmon fish held by its tail and a loaf of bread laying on her other hand. For the second time that day Toothless show no signs of distrust toward the girl as he crawled along the floor toward the tempting fish. He lifted his head up and widened his maw far enough for him to snatch the fish when he was ready.

Hiccup noticed right away that Miss Astrid took a glimpse of the dragon's mouth and could see something different.

"No teeth?" she scrunched her eyes with interest. She looked up at Hiccup, saying, "Is that why yoo call him-"

In an instant, the Night Fury unsheathed his fangs from under his pink gums, filching the fish from her hands. The salmon flipped in the air for a moment until the dragon snatched it and then swallowed the meal in two bites.

Miss Astrid had instinctively drew her arms close to her chest and gasped in broad astonishment, and perhaps awe, at the site she had just witnessed.

"Toothless." she finished in a light whisper, her eyes still trained on the dragon.

While smacking his lips in satisfaction, Toothless shared a look with Hiccup. **"Perhaps the female isn't so bad, she's got good taste in-\*\_saltswimmys-\_\*that's for sure."\***

**"And what do we say when we're grateful for a meal?"** **Hiccup** raised a brow at his friend as he made the inquire.

Almost instantaneously Toothless' pupils turned into slits as he returned his attention back toward the girl. He walked toward her, his mindset on a reason Hiccup could not fathom while she stepped back nervously, stumbling over her words along with her feet. Right when she back reached the wall Toothless continued pouring his eyes over her. Hiccup was about to inquire why his friend was behaving when he heard an old, but familiar noise coming from the back of the dragon's throat.

\_Oh, gods and lord please tell me he is not doing what I think he hisâ€¦|.\_

Hiccup's prayers proved to be unheard as Toothless evidently regurgitated one half-eaten fish onto Miss Astrid's unsuspecting hands. Predictably her face twisted in repulsion toward the digested fish and ruefully turned her head away in all probability to avoid its ripe smell. Toothless cleared his throat breathing in and out as he stared at her patiently.

Miss Astrid lifted her gaze from her hands to where Hiccup stood silently asking him for an explanation to what was happening.

**"Well, what are you waiting for?"** **Toothless** warbled in confusion; his pupils were perfect ovals showing that he was less hostile than before.

**"I gave you half of mine back for you to eat."** **Evidently** he believed the girl needed the fish as much as he did after noticing her waist being so lanky.

Hiccup recalled how Toothless had done this for him when he fed the larger Night Fury for the first time. He deduced it was an instinct for dragons to give a part of their meal back to a hatchling, or a



malnourished human in both his and Miss Astrid's cases.

"He," Hiccup pursed his lips, trying to find the right words to come out. He was unsure of how she would react to being compared to a dragon's offspring. "He wants to offer you the fish as a gift of sorts. You need to eat it in order for the message to be set across to him."

Miss Astrid gave him an expression that showed her incredulity at what he had just spoken.

"Yoo want me tah eat this-this lump of raw meat that was in the stomach of a giant lizard less than two minutes ago?"

Hiccup shrugged his shoulders, unable to answer the question directly. The girl looked back at the dragon with him staring back. His head tilted to and from her and the fish in her hands being poignant of why she wasn't accepting his gift.

While sighing in great reluctance, Miss Astrid brought the trawl close to her mouth and created a small indent and held the tiny bit inside her jaws.

Toothless trilled in approval, leading her to hum in agreement. Hiccup correctly guessed she was planning to spit out the fish when the black dragon no longer paid attention to her, but he knew the attempt would be futile. As he predicted, Toothless made the motion for her to swallow. Him believing that her humming from earlier signified her wishing to speak but was unable to with the disgusting raw pink meat in her mouth.

In an almost comical fashion, Miss Astrid's eyes widened in exasperation; her cheeks rounded from the excess entity until they minimized away, her forcing to consume the fish. After gasping shallowly, she groaned in discomfort.

Hiccup tightened his eyes in sympathy. He knew exactly how she was feeling.

Toothless did not seem to understand the human's pain as he licked the rim of his mouth.

"\*\*Delicious, eh?\*\*"

Miss Astrid, bless her soul, carried a green complexion and expressed pure misery over what she had been subjugated. She wrenched her head up staring at both boy and dragon with a calculating intent look.

The edges of her mouth pinched ascending upward.

"If that is what sushi is like then I am never heading fer Japan when I'm outta here." Miss Astrid said.

Hiccup tilted his head inquisitively. Her words still made no sense, but she still found new ways to astound him. Beside him Toothless shared the same quizzical stare but he was trying to piece together the unusual mien Miss Astrid held. The smile she made looked very different from the ones Hiccup gave the Night Fury.

Toothless began with pulling the edges of his mouth, making an effort to re-create the odd beam she was demonstrating. The endeavor developed into a humorous sight that Toothless was left unaware. The dragon's strive did not go unnoticed by Miss Astrid either as she set down her slippery fish and paid close attention. Watching Toothless might have driven her into a trance, Hiccup thought as she unwittingly moved herself forward and began reaching out toward the Night Fury. Hiccup was about to exclaim his opinion of how that wasn't such a good idea until Toothless beat him to it. He brought his fangs again with a menacing snarl, backing far away from the human girl's hand. With a huff and narrowed eyes the black dragon padded away from the two juveniles.

\* \* \*

><p>Astrid continued to stare at the retreating dragon. She was at a total loss over what had just happened until she remembered about almost touching that giant lizard. What on earth was she thinking? For a deranged minute, her sanity was gone and replaced with thinking that the dragon wasâ€| <em>cute<em>.

Astrid mentally sighed. Being reckless did nothing for her anymore those days.

All she wanted was to get away from everything after the horrible day at school. An escape from reality was what she needed. And ironically the first place that popped in her head was Haddock Castle. Like when she tried to touch Toothless, Astrid thought she was losing her mind for thinking of going there but she made a promise to help Hiccup with his 'condition;' even if he didn't know about it.

Before setting foot there (and quickly changing out of her uniform into street clothes), she remembered noticing how bare the castle kitchen was. Whether it had been born from pity or some other feeling of remorse Astrid felt inclined to do something for the boy. She figured that if there was no bread on the kitchen shelves that must have meant Hiccup. It mattered to her because she wanted to show both dragon and boy some appreciation for bringing her home in one piece. Bread and fish seemed like a good peace offering at the time. She thought the bread would probably be considered a delicacy, and the fish being the only meat Astrid felt wouldn't be too comparable to her own. She bought both at the market and stealthily went up to the castle.

After the series of events that occurred never once did Astrid consider a dragon could resemble a puppy? She knew from past encounters that he most certainly was not a puppy, but when he smiled-she hoped he was smiling-something stirred inside her. For a moment, she didn't see a vicious beast. Instead, she saw a good soul. A creature's eyes that reflected someone else she knew. He made that toothless grin as though he were trying to make the mood around them lighter, more cheery. It brought to mind of the moments from when Hiccup did the same thing with his dry wit.

A voice belonging to Hiccup snapped the blonde out of her thoughts momentarily. Her initial grimace returned when she shook her head his way, causing him to flinch slightly but not ran away as his friend did.

"Iâ€|" he hesitated, concern plastered on his face. Astrid was

starting to grow tired of his constant worrying. She almost wanted to see that awkward expression. It felt more casual and less depressing. Dejected precedents were the reason she came there after all.

"Spit it out," she snapped accidentally. The young Hofferson didn't wish to turn the situation into a strained direction.

"I could not but wonder if you desired to go search for Toothless. The rain is starting to clear out so he might be outside in the courtyard."

"What makes yoo think I'd want tah go looking fer him?" Astrid said.

"You wanted to touch him," he answered simply as though it was the easiest answer in the world. "I would lay a wager that you still do."

Astrid snorted, turning her head away. "That's ridiculous."

"Denial does not suit you, Miss Astrid."

"I said yoo could call me Astrid, remember?" she affirmed, temporally changing the subject. "There's no need to be formal with me and it would make things less awkward between us. At least I think it will."

If there was going to be some form of familiarity, she wanted things to loosen up around them. Being on a first-name basis was a part of the package deal; whether she liked it or not.

"Well, \_Astrid \_I would think someone as brave as you wouldn't be afraid of a dragon."

Astrid raised a brow but remained quiet to see where he was going with this.

"You came back to this place five times, not that I am keeping track-" Astrid scoffed. He totally was-"but I assumed that maybe if you are courageous enough to face a dragon once what's to say you can't again?"

"Maybe I don't want to," Astrid shrugged her shoulders, giving Hiccup a deadpanned stare. "Maybe I was having a lapse of brain power and almost did something stupid."

"Or maybe you saw something inside the dragon that wasn't so terrifying."

Her body stiffened. How could he have been so exact with what she felt?

"Perhaps you could try reaching out to him again?"

"I have this thing about wanting tah stay alive thank yoo," she countered, feeling rather smug for besting the boy.

Hiccup held a small smirk of his own. "From all the past encounters with you I was led to believe that you wouldn't back down from a challenge."

"Hoffersons do not back down from challenges." she said mechanically. She bit her tongue in hopes it would keep more automatic responses locked within.

"Then what's stopping you now?"

Astrid eyed him curiously, suspicion bubbling in the surface.

"Yoo **\_\*\*really \*\*\_**want me tah spend time with Toothless, any particular reason fer it?"

Hiccup's answer was clear and true. "I want both of my friends to like each other."

Astrid blinked. She wasn't sure how to react. None of her mates ever stated directly to her how they were all together, it felt unnecessary. An old unspoken rule was she picked who was in the group since they were in Primary. But this boy, this foreign; different being came along inadvertently breaking down the barriers along with her proverbial pace. Astrid wasn't sure she like this change but somehow there was something comparable buried deep down. She couldn't find its exact location but the presence was there. She saw it when she came inside the castle, met Hiccup; found his roomâ€¦ the toy by Mummy\_.

A small pang inside her chest threatened to rattle her chest.

"Please Astrid," once again the boy held his hand out to her, this time he turned his gaze away. She became perplexed by the gesture, once again finding his form different and strange. She thought of rethinking it in a more positive light that this change was something new. Sometimes the new could be considered an excellent thing, and she could safely admit Hiccup was good too.

After finalizing that there were no dark intentions coming from the boy, Astrid reluctantly allowed herself to get dragged where Hiccup was taking her. The next five minutes were muffled out from her brain, (ignoring whatever ramblings Hiccup might have been saying) as Astrid felt numb all over. She was allowing herself to be weak, and she hated herself for it.

Walking down to the courtyard was the easy part but the next step came with physically going out to it became a struggle. Not that Astrid was forced into a place she went in bravely, thank you very much. When she strutted into the confining walls of the green quad, Hiccup's prediction of his dragon friend turned out true. The black animal sunbathed beneath the small golden rays that weren't obscured by clouds. It had to have been the first time she saw him look serene.

Sadly the dragon's relaxed mood changed when he spotted the two teenagers. His expression became dour mixed with dark annoyance. Hiccup, if oblivious or did not care, threw a small wave, earning the driest look Astrid ever seen on the reptile. Hiccup did not seem fazed by the dragon's attitude as he continued walking toward him. Astrid followed him from behind and made sure she was a safe distance from any potential fire blasts.

Three meters was far enough, right?

Hiccup placed a finger over his lips, motioning for silence. While stepping over the mud and puddles Hiccup led Astrid closer and closer to Toothless. The black dragon couldn't see the two with his long tail circling over his face. Carefully the cursed stretched his arm, close within range barely centimeters from the tailfins. Before Astrid could speak out how that seemed like a very bad idea when the tail whipped up and uncurled, allowing the dragon to meet Hiccup eye to eye. The dragon's face read, "Seriously?" all over. He appeared very displeased with what Hiccup was trying to pull and he in turn excused himself by taking a large step back soon stood where Astrid was.

"Yoo know I would say, 'I told yoo so,' but I never got the chance tah warn ya."

Hiccup frowned. "Let's give him some more time."

Astrid could not hold back her laughter for a good minute.

For the remainder of the hour Hiccup and Astrid wisely chose to leave Toothless alone. It seemed Hiccup hadn't come up with any other ideas as he tried occupying his time with drawing in the mud. Astrid was starting to wish she had brought a book-that wasn't stolen-to read when she began noticing the images the boy was creating.

None of the muddy impressions screamed amazing, but it was clear to Astrid that Hiccup could draw in any medium if he set his mind to it. Most of what he was currently sketching childish doodles that at a glance appeared to be nothing but lines and squiggles, but to someone paying close attention (namely Astrid) the images were akin the landmarks she had seen around her island home. The stone archway led out of the main square was indented in the wet earth. The sea pillars that sprinkled across the bay were enveloped in a near perfect circle representing the coastline. Little lines that resembled arrows with extra points might have been the pine tree forest that bordered along the school and Haddock field.

A moment passed before Astrid gently fell to her knees on the grass and joined him. It was either born out of boredom or intrigue Astrid drew small houses in front of the tiny forest and then added little boats in the bay. Her fingers were dragging through the mud, and her knee was hurting again but Astrid didn't care.

None of their pictures was detailed the same way as the drawing of Toothless Hiccup started to work on. She tried to help with shaping the spine while he worked on the ear-plate-thingys. It actually started to look like the real thing.

She was paying so much attention to her and Hiccup's skill that she almost didn't notice the giant black dragon sitting behind her. Hiccup was aware of the dragon's existence too but continued with his half of the drawing as though nothing had changed. Astrid could hear the sounds of purring and looked through the corner of her eye to see Toothless following Hiccup's left hand with his own pair of green eyes. As soon as he arrived the giant lizard quickly staggered away.

Astrid turned her head around to see the beast was on his hind legs.

Maybe he was trying to look more human but she quickly doubted that idea. She watched how Toothless picked up a fallen tree branch with his mouth and dragged it toward her and Hiccup. Astrid could see the boy had his full attention on the dragon and he began lugging the large stick into the dirt. He weaved and twirled everywhere around the two humans, pausing only to stare at them for a moment before continuing his work.

"I think he's attempting to draw an illustration of us," Hiccup whispered under his breath. Astrid turned to see him with raised eyebrows. She didn't realize the dragon, or any dragon could imitate a human in such a way. Perhaps the stolen dragon book was wrong about them?

Toothless focused solely on his earthen canvas for a few more minutes until he dropped the branch and stood back to admire his work. Astrid and Hiccup picked themselves up to see lines of abstract proportions all over the place. The lines crisscrossed over each other that were in no way dictating a coherent representation of anything. However, Astrid wanted to find a better spot to see the lines better.

She took a step that landed her foot over one of the lines by accident. The moment her shoe sole touched the line growling could be heard. Astrid turned to the source and noticed right away how angry Toothless appeared to be. Hiccup from behind beckoned her to lift her foot up in which she did. The instant her shoe left the ground contented croons came from Toothless. His big green eyes were round once more with a placid expression on his face.

Ever being the curious teen Astrid planted her foot on the line again, getting the dragon riled up again. Curiosity was soon replaced with amusement. She lifted of leg, Toothless returned to his docile behavior once more. She heard small chuckles from Hiccup, but Astrid chose to carry on with her little game with Toothless. She placed her foot on the line until seeing Toothless looking more agitated than the last time.

\_He must really have a thing about people messing with his stuff.\_  
Astrid thought with a slight smirk.

Carefully, in order not to harm the 'masterpiece' anymore Astrid moved gently over the lines, hoping to maneuver out of the way. Similar to how she dodged and pivoted in Bashyball the girl stepped lightly and skillfully in a unique pivot. Her dance was conjoined with Hiccup as he followed her patterns, albeit clumsily. Astrid was distracted by the laughter and dancing that she didn't come to terms with being less than a meter away from the black dragon.

He breathed through his nose, sending a small gust of air into Astrid's hair. She became fully aware of being near him and brought her arm up for balance. The dragon mistook her attempt to steady as a threat.

When Toothless growled from the close limb Astrid mentally noted that it wasn't as harsh as before, he was more nervous than angry. She too knew what it was like to have personal space issues. But then Astrid remembered the posture Hiccup made when he extended his hand to her. His did not look her in the eye because he was showing her respect. An odd form of respect, could it have been stemmed from a familiar encounter with Toothless in the past? Astrid thought the idea sounded

crazy, but she had nothing to lose up to that point.

Once again Astrid held her arm in front of Toothless but just as Hiccup did for her, she made sure to look away and keep her stance leveled. She couldn't believe she was doing this. It was crazy and so much unlike her, which was why she had to do it.

The dragon ceased his snarling, causing Astrid to wonder what his next move would be. Her eyes were closed when she winced from the slight pressure on her hand.

Wait, what?

Astrid looked through her squinted eyes and tried containing her surprised gasp at seeing what was right before her. Toothless had placed his snout under Astrid's palm, the warm breath gently swathing. The scaly skin was just as warm and a little bumpy to the touch but made her think of velvet. The entirety of the moment took Astrid by surprise as she gaped in wonder. When her eyes fully opened so did the dragon's. He evaluated her for a moment with his oval eyes before they turned back into slits, and he retreated.

The pressure on her hand was gone, but the feeling stayed.

"I can't believe it. I touched a real dragon." Astrid said shakily as Hiccup walked over to her.

"Oh, then I guess I do not count." he chuckled, feigning pain in his voice. Apparently he was trying to lighten the mood. Good thing he didn't have retractable teeth or it would have been awkward. "Very well then."

Astrid was tempted to roll her eyes but wanted to make the discussion more than lighthearted. "A \_real\_ dragon, Hiccup. Not whatever is happening tah yoo."

"What exactly are you implying?" He sounded unsettled by what Astrid said. She wasn't totally sure if this was how she wanted the conversation to start as, but she assumed there weren't any other options. There was so much her brain was trying to process except she needed to stay focused.

"What's happening to yoo isn't something magical. It has tah be a medical condition or something like it."

"You just touched a dragon, witnessed me take the form of one the other night, and you still don't believe in magic?"

She waved him off, finding the question too absurd to answer directly. "I can believe that a dragon is just an unspecified animal that hasn't been discovered yet, but what is happening you has to have some explanation."

"There is an explanation as to what is ailing me; it is the curse."

Astrid rolled her eyes this time. The boy was starting to sound like a broken record. "Look Hiccup, what's happening to yoo can't just be some magic curse. I mean there has to be some scientific reason for what is happening to yoo."

"My parents told me-"

"All right yeah I yer parents told you what they thought had happened." Though at the moment Astrid was starting to believe less and less of that. "But perhaps there could be more to it. Maybe the old woman threatening yer father was just a coincidence."

"Uh, then care to explain the wings, tail, and firepower?" Hiccup counted the list with his fingers, appearing to be clearly annoyed. "I am not sure how much you were listening to what I had to say but please let me talk," he motioned her to stay quiet when she tried opening her mouth.

"I do not think people with any medical condition have the same afflictions I possess. As shocking as it sounds, I'm afraid I do not have that luxury of books that hold current events or ground breaking scientific discoveries of the modern age. Believe me when I say that my parents tried everything to find a cure. I've been like this way for a long time, and I have grown use to it.

"I can't even remember a night when I wasn't a dragon. I never thought of the Transformation as abnormal until my parents bore it into my mind. It may seem strange to you, but it's who I am."

In all honesty, Astrid did not have a hard time believing him. But that only hardened her resolve. If a dragon like Toothless could remain stubborn why not a mere human as her? Failure was not in a Hofferson's vocabulary.

"No, I think get that." she confessed looking sideways for a moment before tilting straight again. "But still, I tried tah look fer some insight with help from a friend but I got nothing from it."

"Why?" Hiccup asked, "Why do you wish to help me?"

For that moment and many before Astrid had asked herself that same question (and of course finding it unbelievable someone would ask something so stupid. Did he never meet anyone willing to look out for him before?).

She never became so invested in someone else's live. Astrid kept her distance from her mates for that reason and knew that they never really needed her aid. The growing desire to assist this poor boy stemmed right after seeing his toy dragon. It was sown with obvious love from a mother, but she was nowhere to be found, and neither was the father. Astrid wasn't familiar with parental abandonment but she knew the feeling of losing a family member all too well.

The numbness returned tenfold leading Astrid to feel cold. Her mind and lips were the only ones properly functioning for what she said to him.

"Becauseâ€| Nobody should be suffering without some way of knowing if there can be help fer them. Even if that person is an odd ball like yoo are."

Hiccup studied the ground for a minute, his interest in it made Astrid wonder if he lost concern for their conversation. Thankfully her questions went away when the boy gave her a thoughtful



smile.

"Thank you. I still find looking for a cure fruitless, but I appreciate that you are so willing to help me. I can't remember anyone else care for me this way before."

At that moment, Astrid felt the inside of her cheeks warm a bit. Sympathy had found its way into her heart before her mind crushed it from spreading. She quickly recovered before brushing off the foreign sentiment for good.

"Fish wasn't the only thing I bought at the market," she said rather abruptly after clearing her throat. She unzipped her rucksack like before and rummaged through a different plastic bag that didn't hold the fish she purchased. That unwitting grouping would have been stinky and messy.

"I hope yoo didn't mind me noticing but well I noticed that the kitchen didn't have any bread lying around. I thought yoo like if I brought you a loaf. It's just plain bread, I hope that's okay."

She handed the loaf to him wordlessly, having felt she said her fill. There was a long stretch of stillness for a minute, making Astrid grow concerned that he didn't like the gesture she did or had a gluten allergy. Much to the relief she was trying to renounce the boy proved her wrong. The illuminated expression Hiccup held reminded Astrid of a child getting what he wanted during Christmas. That damn sympathy malady was threatening to spread again.

"I can't remember the last time I had any. This is a wonderful gift, thank you... again." A moment passed before a pained look crossed his face, and he lowered his gaze.

"Sorry, if I am repeating myself too much."

Astrid gave him a dumbfounded look, shaking her head in disbelief at what she was seeing. "Yer apologizing fer saying sorry?"

Hiccup's ears turned a light shade of pink. "Is that bad?"

She shrugged her shoulders, finding the entire moment surreal and truthfully unable to put together a good enough answer.

"I bought the fish fer Toothless since I had no idea if he'd rather prefer it over bread," Astrid further explained while weakly gesturing at the dragon. He was curled up with his fins covering his face again. She wasn't sure if he was asleep or just pretending but decided not to care at the moment. Toothless wasn't going to be hurting her after what happened between them.

"Dragons do to enjoy eating fish. It has to be one of their favorite foods, among other things." Hiccup said with such familiarity that Astrid supposed he had previous experience. She knew not to question that any longer.

Astrid showed a small smile, pleased for the approval. She could take any compliment no matter how indirect. "I was also thinking of getting an eel too but-"

"No, no eels," Hiccup said at once, firmly.

"What, why?"

"They do not agree with dragons, at\*\* all\*\*. Believe me, I should know. It was a very dark night when my parents decided to serve pickled eel for dinner." He visibly shuddered, probably from remembering the apparent bad memory.

"The only thing I can describe from that episode is that no one was able to go into the dining hall for months until my father cleaned up all the stains."

Astrid's eyes had widened momentarily before she nodded quickly.  
"Okay, then no eel for like ever."

For a while, comfortable silence developed between the two. Astrid sometimes broke it when asking about specific plants growing in the courtyard. She was mildly impressed with how much vegetation he was taking care of. He even had a full-grown apple tree. Hiccup was more than willing to tell her their names, age, even offering to give her a few samples to bring home with. She turned down the offer.

"There must be something I can give you. I am the host here and yet you are the one giving me gifts."

Astrid wanted to brush his question away; saying something along the lines of giving a reward to her seemed unjust. She had been a bitch in the past, and she wanted to make up for it, shouldn't that have been enough for him? Sadly, Astrid knew it was not. She could overlook Hiccup's words, but she knew he didn't like that. Just as before he was going to be persistent and stubborn until an agreement of some kind was made. Being his friend was something he cared about a lot.

"I'm not sure of what I could ask from yoo."

"Anything," Hiccup answered immediately.

Astrid held bit back a smile. The boy was far too trusting for his own good sometimes.

"Well, yer probably the first person tah ask what I want today. I can't think of something here that would be of value tah me." She glimpsed at the crumbling stone walls and overgrown plant life. "So far it's been me losin' mah valuables."

Hiccup titled his head with eyebrows furrowing in confusion.  
"Pardon?"

"Well, tah sum it all up I lost a book that was really important to me." She thought to keep the part of the book actually getting stolen in order not to upset Hiccup even more.

"What sort of book was it?" Hiccup began until he corrected himself.  
"I-I mean, what is the book's title?"

Astrid pursed her lip. She was unsure whether or not to reveal the book's name until grasping the probability that he probably would know of it since he didn't own books with, 'current events.'

"It's called the Book of Dragons byâ€¦" she silently groaned, she was having trouble remembering that stupid Norse name.

"Some guy named Borg Ian, or something like that."

"Bor\*\*k\*\* \_EinarÃ°r\_?" Hiccup answered while pronouncing the name effortlessly.

Astrid gaped for a moment and then narrowed her eyes suspiciously.  
"How do yoo know that?"

The boy beamed, his smile growing in a way that made Astrid start regretting of asking.

"I know the name because I have read his book on dragon identification for as long as I can remember."

Every fear of needing to find a new book and re-do the project vanished. The chance to save half of her grade without having to backtrack was now possible. Desperately she grabbed a fistful of his tunic-light green with lighter yellow edging-and stared at him directly in the eye.

"Yoo know where another copy of that book is?" Astrid examined every inch of his face to be certain he wasn't fibbing.

Wordlessly he nodded. A faint coloring formed around his cheeks but Astrid paid no mind to it.

"Then where is it?"

During the commotion, the black dragon Toothless awoke from his nap and looked at the two teenagers with a blank stare.

Astrid might-\_probably\_-need more than a fish to appease the dragon and explain herself for hoisting Hiccup up to her knees.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Boy oh boy, Hiccup's getting a good induction of learning the art of handling women isn't he? XD But don't you worry there will be more slight Hicstrid/Hiccstrid (I don't know the official term help me!) in the next chapter and more Toothless too. ^-^ We can't have enough of that.

It's been a while since I did a sort of cliffy. \*Waves at cliff\* Hello! Anywho I was to say thanks for the generous amount of reviews for last chapter and helping the story reach more than 130 reviews. I love you all.

\*\*(1)- \*\*So, that's my attempt at describing a zipper. I honestly don't think Hiccup would've been exposed to a contraption such as that in the 1800s. Even though they were invented in like the 1850s but seeing how Hiccup's interaction with the outside world is zero and he was shut inside the castle since he was born might be a reason he never saw one before Astrid came along.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 18. The Library and the Book

**\*\*Q-A: \*\***Happy Labor day to all my American fans out there. It's a day of rest from the first horrifying week of school (though not for me since I start in the middle of Septempber) **\*COUGH! COUGH!\*** Behold chapter 18! Wow, I didn't think it would have gone this far but I'm glad you guys have been sticking with me. I can't believe how many reviews I got in the last chapter and hopefully more in this one. Make sure all of you take note of how 'original' the title is.  
XD

**\*\*ATTENTION NOTICE:\*\***\_\_ I am going back to school on SEPTEMBER 15, 2014. I will not know when I can update but I will try to work on my stories with the free time I have left from schoolwork. I hope you can all understand this.\_\_

**\*\*Response to reviews:\*\***

**\*\*Kelly: \*\***Thanks for the review. I'm glad you like the story so far. Yeah I do make a few mistakes, which is ironic since I'm such a word Nazi when I review other people's work. XD

**\*\*Disclaimer: \*\***I own nothing. So don't send lawyers to sue me, I'm not that rich.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>The Library and the Book<strong>

August 31st, 2010 (Haddock castle; library, almost five hours passed midday)~

When someone were to ask Astrid Hofferson if she liked to read the short answer would be, "eh, if I read it once then what's the point of reading it again?"

The long (and truthful) answer would be, yes, she did read. A lot.

With someone with grades as good as her of course, she read. To her friends they assumed she preferred athleticism to anything else with how fierce she was on the field. In secret she read for pleasure just as much as for studying, maybe even more so. Most of her favorites stemmed from the shelf in her room, most of them having belonged to her later mother. Those ended up becoming precious to her more than anything else. But even with the decent number of books she owned, nothing, nothing, prepared her for what she was looking at that very moment.

The town's library may have been one of the largest buildings on the island, but it paled in comparison to what the castle had to offer.

How could a room adjacent to the one with a large fireplace and tapestries appear grander and filled with splendor? Cupboards and large shelves filled the walls and floor with so many books that Astrid was sure would take more than a lifetime to read them all. And if she could, she would read every last one to find out what secrets were hidden behind each page. Brenda Hofferson once chimed how books welcomed anyone that opened them, how they would comfort you in less

than a sentence. Yet, for all the times Astrid tried reading her mother's collection she never found solace.

Swallowing hard Astrid blinked the tears away and continued following Hiccup. A few ladders leaned the tops of shelves to which Hiccup used as he reached for one reddish-brown, leather bound book. After finding a ladder, he set it in place. The boy was beginning to make his ascent when Astrid noticed something jarring.

"Uh, Hiccup." the young man turned his head around, signifying that he was giving his undivided attention to her.

"I think yer feet are still wet from the mud outside. Are yoo sure climbing is such a good idea?"

Hiccup chuckled, visibly unperturbed. "Astrid, I had climbed on these ladders before I even knew how to read. I appreciate your concern but," he said nothing else because within the moment he grabbed the red-brown book his slippery feet failed him and he fell down. Toothless was lighter on his paws than the boy was and succeed in catching him by the hem of his shirt. Astrid saw that Toothless shared the same sentiments with both of them giving Hiccup equal stern expressions.

Sheepishly Hiccup rubbed the back of his neck before giving both his friends a cheeky grin. He lifted his book-handling arm and handed the ornate hardback. "Here is the book. Just as promised."

"Yoo don't have much caution fer yer own safety do yoo?" Astrid asked with a small smile forming.

"Not \_all \_the time."

Astrid was mesmerized by the dragon's ability to match the boy's occasional derisive attitude as well as rolling his eyes back. Toothless then knowingly snorted a puff of air blowing all the way through Hiccup's hair, his fringe falling over.

"\*\*Thankee, freundlee me com yowr keendlee frettrn \*\*(Thanks, friend I appreciate your kind concerns).\*\*" \*\*

"Yer doing that again," Astrid stated, her eyebrows scrutinizing. "Speaking in that funny language that sounds like growls and â€|hissing?"

"Forgive me," Hiccup said. He scratched underneath Toothless' chin, which in turn released the boy who then landed with a loud knock on the hardwood floor. "It was impolite to leave a lady out of the conversation. Please, if there is anything you wish to speak aboutâ€|. " He trailed off on purpose most likely so that Astrid may fill in the blanks.

"Well," she trained her eyes to the ceiling. She was charmed to see the constellations decorated and each image named in the old dead language of Latin. "Yoo have a big library," she nearly bit her tongue in disgruntlement for sounding so lame. "It's has tah be bigger than the public library. Number of books included."

"Yes," Hiccup nodded affirmatively. "This is one of the oldest rooms inside the castle. Back when this was still a monastery, the priests

bounded bibles and other important tomes. That was partially the reason there needed to be enough of an interval for all the shelves. Unfortunate for me to say many of them were lost after the Viking conquest caused by the Hairy Hooligans." His fingers grazed over the spine of one book, faintly as though any slight pressure would cause the object to crumble into dust.

"Sadly, I might add, over the years dozens more perished from old age and yellowing." Hiccup appeared shaken by revealing this to Astrid with his breathing becoming shallow. "I was unable to save them."

Astrid frowned a bit, trying to hide the true devastation inside her. She couldn't imagine if she were in his place, not finding a way to save the things you love. Her mind began to wonder to the most unnerving thoughts when her eyes spied upon one novel that caught her attention.

The title was the first thing she noticed; Pride & Prejudice. Oh, didn't that bring back some painful memories.

"Is that a book you are familiar with?" Hiccup asked, ignorant of her understated distraught.

More than yoo'd like tah know. Astrid quipped in her thoughts.

"No," she fibbed. Glowering at the novel with every fiber. "I mean, I think mah mum might have a copy but I'm not sure." That too was a big fat lie with her being well aware of the book tucked away on the shelf in her room. Brenda had read it to Astrid when they had cravings for clever remarks from two hundred years ago.

(And by a female author no less, that was an added bonus.)

Astrid frowned while rearranging the thoughts in her mind soon became relevant again.

"What exactly does your mother think about the book?"

Astrid flinched, swift enough that Hiccup did not notice. Toothless though saw and tilted his head to the left. She wanted to glare at him but knew that she was trying to stay on the giant black lizard's good side, which included Hiccup's as well. Probably ignoring his question was not a step forward.

How was she supposed to answer? Talking about someone who was technically dead was both pointless and would break down the psychological wall she worked so hard to keep intact.

"That's personal information," Astrid spoke, keeping an even tone in order not to come off cold. For a moment, she felt her throat squeezed from the half-lie, forcing her to gulp down unwanted saliva. Thankfully her esophagus loosened allowing it (and her) to relax. She didn't understand why lying then felt like such a crime, perhaps she felt harsh for keeping Hiccup out of the dark when he was so honest.

"Ah, I apologize." He deflated slightly while looking to the ground, forlorn.

"Yoo didn't know," Astrid consoled, biting her lip. The air around her felt stale from the acrid atmosphere left seconds earlier. This wasn't exactly going the way she wanted to. This wasn't even the right way to keep friends (or at least from what she could think of seven years prior). Instantly-and in sweet relief-she remembered about the book in her hands and began gazing upon the leather binding.

"Do you wish to read it first?" Hiccup said, daring to appear forward. When she turned her attention to him, he quickly added, "In case everything is all and accounted for. I have not looked over its pages in some time."

"Uh," Astrid's eyes shifted back to the book, its weathered frame shined faintly under the torchlight. Similar to how the first one brought her intrigue, this one also gave her a reprieved feeling. She could salvage her English grade in spite of how bad her journal might turn out in the future. With the hope of her term marks in her hands, Astrid asked Hiccup to point out the closest table. She knew from experience that it would take more than a few minutes to look through the big manuscript.

He guided her to what looked like a Davenport desk? She almost whipped her head in an attempt to get a closer look at the furniture. Astrid knew the name since her father told her younger self to stop climbing on it many times in the past. The only difference was between the two tables was her dad's was an evident antique, but the one Hiccup led her to did not look old in the slightest. There were signs of dust and developing spider webs but furthermore, the wood wasn't cracked or splintered in any way like her father's desk. Hell, even the lacquer looked like it was painted on recently.

"Are you going to sit?" he asked, eyes squinting ever so slightly. Was he fed up with her already or genuinely concerned that she hadn't sat down?

Astrid stared straight, and her attention focused on the table when she blurted, "Only if yoo do."

It took her 2.5 seconds as to why that sounded so wrong.

"I mean, so that if there is something bad-like a ripped page-I'll punch yoo."

Hiccup's possible concern shifted into a deadpanned stare.

"Yes, because that promise will win me over now."

Astrid scowled for a moment before pushing a chair back and then sat toward the desk. "I can still thump yoo."

"Again with the violence." Hiccup sighed, but Astrid could see he was merely overdramatic. In the end, he joined her while Toothless broke off to a corner of the library and curled up in a ball. The two humans were left to their own devices with Astrid still mulling over why she asked Hiccup to sit with her.

I need him around to criticize in case the book's ruined.

Her snippy conscience then reminded her, \_Well, even if there was a small case of grime over a shelf or rug Hiccup would have them look decent and well protected. \_

\_But he said not too long ago about how he couldn't save all the books in this library. \_

\_Books are one thing but saving your leg is another.\_

\_That again?\_ Astrid furrowed her brow, unhappy with that memory coming back up. She felt disordered from experiencing the recollection when a hand nudged her shoulder. The blonde turned to her left to see Hiccup removing his hand from her with a remorseful expression.

"Wha," she began to say but couldn't find the right words. Astrid felt foolish for zoning out again.

"You were starrng off into space for some time. I was growing a little worried," Hiccup elaborated.

"Yoo better not tell anybody about that." she warned teasingly, a small simper forming from her lips.

She was prepared to hear him squeak out an apology but instead he muttered sardonically, "Who else am I to talk to?"

At once Astrid widened her eyes before putting her attention back on the book.

Hiccup frowned before scratching his ear. "I shouldn't have said that."

Astrid's face softened and shook her head, scanning her eyes to her left. "I was rude. I said I was going tah stop doing that, but I broke that promise. \_\*\*Again\*\*\_."

"My mother always told me old habits die hard," he said.

"Everybody's mothers say that." Even mine, she wanted to add but held back her tongue.

"Perhaps that too is a habit that hasn't died out: mothers reprocessing the same proverbs."

Astrid couldn't stop the laugh that bubbled out of her chest. "Since when did yoo become a comedian?"

Hiccup smirked a small hint of pride showing. "Why always, of course. My friend can never get enough of my sharp wit." He threw his head back, turning his eyes toward the sleeping dragon. "Isn't that correct Toothless?"

The dragon only jerked in his slumber, jerking his head once from a snort.

Astrid giggled again after seeing the exasperated look on Hiccup. If she weren't careful enough, both of them would start thinking she was beginning to \_enjoy\_ the boy's company.



What a silly thought.

In no time flat they opened the bulky cover revealing yellowed pages Astrid was very familiar with. The mixed-matched colored handwritten sentences from the previous book were present but near the margins were unsystematically annotated in dark green lettering. The small notes were written alongside each page giving insight that was both edited down and enlightened over the original text. When Astrid read over the Timberjacksheet, the new information stated how the \_Sharp Class\_ dragon took pleasure in back scratches. In the \_Boulder Class\_ chapter, she found out the Gronckle enjoyed eating volcanic rocks because they are easier to digest. Scauldrons from the \_Tidal Class\_ were prone to become less hostile if someone was to dump him or she with seawater as it, apparently, reminds them of their oceanic habitat.

"I don't remember reading anything like this from the other copy." Astrid declared, giving Hiccup a pointed look. There was something ostensibly personal about the added footnotes.

His weak smile could not reach his eyes, forcing him to turn away. "I might have made a few alterations to the text."

Astrid sighed. "What yoo did was a bit more than 'a few alterations.'"

"All I did was write down what Toothless told me, I swear." Hiccup insisted

"The dragon told yoo," Astrid said, her tone breaking off into a stupor.

Hiccup shifted in his seat in a bashful manner. "I can understand what dragons say, I established that before, haven't I?"

"Yes," she answered. "A couple of times."

"Toothless doesn't understand the way humans speak, but he can recognize a person's tone and knowing if they are aggressive or calm and friendly. It's remarkable really."

"So let me get this straight, Toothless \_told \_yoo all this stuff about the dragons?"

"Yes."

"And yoo never question if it was true or false?"

Hiccup frowned, his green eyes hardening.

"Sorry, sorry!" Astrid sputtered hastily. "That was a bad thing tah ask."

The auburn-haired boy sighed while turning his head away. "No, you are not close to Toothless as I am with him. You do have the right to be suspicious. But I will make it clear that he would never lie to me. We have a strong bond of trust between us, well on the whole from time to time."

Astrid showed him a half-smile before settling back into reading. Another few minutes passed by with the two teenagers sitting and reading in comfortable silence.

For a while, Astrid started to take notice of the dragon illustrations. For every general dragon design (the Nadders, Gronckles, Nightmares respectfully) there were sketches of more distinct variety. Dragons ranging with two or more heads were shown, some had the ability to channel their inner chameleon, others conducted lightning from their wingtips, and it was all very exhausting to leaf through. However, the yellowed pictures made her wonder, Toothless was thriving but did that go the same for the other dragons written in the book? While all dragons were once held in Astrid's suspension of disbelief, the more fantastic members felt more like they truly belonged in a fictional fairy tale than a manual. It was an enigma Astrid could not find the answer on her own. Just like the weird desk she's sitting in and not understanding how it was still in great condition—wait, why was she caring about that?

Anyway back to the dragons. Perhaps they all existed at one point but could they have vanished? Become extinct? The only way for her to know was to ask the dragon expert sitting next to her.

"Do you think any of the dragons in this book are still alive?" she attempted to act casual but did not come off as aloof as she wanted. Thankfully Hiccup didn't seem to notice or assume the worst.

"Besides you and Toothless, I mean." There was a sense of unanticipated melancholy in her voice that even she was surprised of having.

Hiccup frowned, but not due to him being offended more that he was scrutinizing her question.

"I am not positive if I can respond to the answer correctly." His hands brushed over the pages, his eyes carefully regarding the picture of a four-headed \_Deadly Shadow\_. Astrid saw the smallest hint of longing coming from the boy.

"It's hard to say if all these dragons still live. I would like to hope so, but if some of their kind were driven to extermination, well that's that, as my father might put it. Still it'd be a real shame if a dragon such as the \_Snaptrapper\_ was gone like the dodo bird." He sounded very pained by the news, bewildering Astrid even more while trying to find a trace of a joke or sarcasm hidden in his tone.

There wasn't.

"I never met either but it saddened my heart when I learned humans killed off the bird. I would have loved to see one."

Astrid sat there, doing her best to take in everything the eccentric boy just uttered. There was something wrong with him, and it wasn't just the curse he kept raving on about. It wasn't just him being a hermit living alone in the castle; he \_knew\_ the entire structure as though he was living there his whole life. He knew all the rooms' conditions and talked about their history as if he really knew it.

All the information he carried with him was behind the times on so many levels. The only conclusions Astrid could come up with were he was lying through his teeth, or he had suffered from some mental illness that made him delusional. Or he could have been born and raised in the castle all along.

â€|.

Nah, the mental illness sounded more legitimate than that. It was impossible. His parents couldn't have been that horrible to raise him in such an abysmal place.

In the end, Astrid wanted to sigh. She was no closer to finding the truth than before.

\* \* \*

><p>For some reason, having a second look at a hunter's manual word by word was not turning into Hiccup's cup of tea. Perhaps it had something to do with most of the information the book held would now be considered false. He also disliked how the chapters performed more as instructions on how to maim or kill a dragon. Of course, he was delighted to be spending time with Astrid. He was also proud to see Toothless tolerating her once she fed him a fish. Hiccup knew it was going to take more than a fresh salmon to build trust. The Night Fury chose to rest his head at the other side of the room. That did not waver Hiccup's optimism however. He would see to it that his friends-plural! He could use the plural form-could become courteous to one another.<p>

Or at least that was his original plan until Astrid turned cold after one conversation that went unfavorable.

Hiccup intended to try understanding Astrid more in order to gain her trust. He saw the way she looked at the Jane Austen novel and brought up her mother. She said the elder Hofferson lady liked reading *Pride and Prejudice*. It left him wondering if Astrid's mother was anything similar to his own. Valhallarama may have been arduous and stubborn; she still had a gentle side to her. She was the one that firstly planted the beautiful rose garden Hiccup now cared for. The other few joys he shared in the castle with her was reading the novels inside the library. He was rather fond of the books written by Jane Austen and her associates. Sadly the collection was incomplete when his mother's cousins stopped sending the books after his fourteenth birthday. He did not know exactly why that occurred though he believed that his proven theory could have been an influence or had some other control.

The young Haddock heir still wished to improve his manifesting relationship with Astrid, but his mind floated back to the failed attempts. Whenever he brought up his parents or when he foolishly asked about Astrid's she turned away, dismissal. He was beginning to notice a pattern, and he wished there was something he could do to change it. Nonetheless, Hiccup supposed he should not try to work on more than one endeavor at a time.

He thought bringing up a frustrating, and yet oddly amusing; subject matter sounded like a logical move.

Hiccup wanted to cough once in order to gain Astrid's attention

again. Sadly Lady Luck was not favoring him at the moment and forced him to swallow an unfortunate moth accidentally. Through a series of violent choking, and one generous slap on his spine by Astrid, Hiccup eventually spat out the unattractive cousin to the butterfly.

"There have got to be better ways of calling for someone's attention," Hiccup said feebly, choosing to ignore the gawking mien from Astrid.

"Okay, what do yoo want tah ask?"

Hiccup halted briefly in answering while thinking carefully over the next words he was about to say.

"What exactly compelled you to obtain the other Book of Dragons from the village's library?"

Astrid straightened her back, giving him a look of consideration. Hiccup held an inkling that she was not prepared for that sort of question. "Wellâ€¦".

The ghost of a smirk played on his features after seeing her confounded expression.

"For someone who doesn't believe in magic I am baffled that you would wish to acquire a book that details all the facts-whether completely accurate or not-" he whispered aside- "about the fantastic beasts and where to find them." \*(1)\*\*

Astrid's face twisted from derisive to anger. Hiccup tapped his fingers over the desk, fidgeting on impulse to remind his self to control his sharp tongue more.

"I simply find it baffling that you are so determined to remove the logic I am familiar with and substitute with something not as plausible."

Astrid sighed, visibly unamused. "Magic is what we call science that is unknown to us.

"Think about it, people back in the old days," she began notwithstanding Hiccup's raising brow at her, "would use that word and its meaning to write off the events or things we couldn't understand and didn't know any better. What was magic a hundred years ago is now science today."

Hiccup exhaled with his eyes halfway shut. He had to be honest with himself and admit Astrid held a valid point. If only a philosophical assertion would be enough to outweigh the heavy truth. If only.

"I am unfortunate to say you won't be finding anything \_scientific \_within these pages unless you keep an open mind. If you do not then, I do not see why you should acquire the book from my possession." He hoped that she would understand his reasoning. Even though her head was in the wrong mindset, her heart was in the right place, and she meant well.

Astrid once had her arms intersecting but then her hands clasped the edge of the table. Her stance and smoldering stare showed that she was feeling threatened.

"I thought yoo said I could take the book?" she demanded.

"I said you might borrow the book if you needed it," he reminded her, "But if you do not take the subject matter seriously enough-"

"I do." She did all but shout.

"Then why waste your time with a book and continue demanding what is my alimnt when I have already given you an answer?"

Astrid stared at him for a few minutes until sitting back down wordlessly. She never lost eye contact during the transition, making Hiccup look back nervously. He was interested in what she was thinking when the girl spoke as though she had heard his thoughts.

"Do yoo think I'm wasting yer time?" she asked, detached.

Hiccup became winded from her accusation. "No! I enjoy our time together, really I do." He was wary about revealing his growing fondness over her company, fearing their fragile bond would dissolve even more so. But he knew desperate actions needed to be taken when the moment called for them. Or when being a spineless coward, which either way. "There are times that you frustrate me to wit's end-no wait, I shouldn't have said that."

He nearly buried his face into his hands. Everyone in his family, according to his father, had a gift with speaking politely yet bemoaned how Hiccup somehow was born with a foot in his mouth. Knowing the curse, he probably was too.

"What I am trying to say is that I don't understand your motivations at times, and I wish I could learn more about you."

One way or another Hiccup was pleasantly surprised to note that his confession did not turn sour. He was expecting her to stand up and leave him and would end their short business there. She exhaled and turned to him with a disgruntled look.

"I thought the book could help me with understanding yoo better. Happy?" She raised her hands in a sign of defeat before resting her chin over the page concerning the Boneknapper.

Was she sulking perhaps?

Hiccup felt the sides of his mouth tugging a bit. He had no idea she was determined to coagulate their friendship just as much as he did. He smiled at her in surrender before prodding the book closer to her elbow, jolting the blonde girl slightly. "Glad. Now you can borrow the book as long as you please."

"That's it?" She raised an eyebrow at him.

Hiccup nodded. In all honesty, he would have allowed her the book in any case.

"That's what I was waiting fer the whole time." she sighed overdramatically, a clear sign of her humor returned. Her hand was about to reach over the book until Hiccup intercepted her in the last

second. He quickly explained that there was one last record in the book that neither had glimpsed and he wished for her to see.

"What?" Astrid asked with genuine interest that nearly startled him.

"This," he answered while carefully flipping the pages toward the Striker Class section. There was the page describing a familiar dragon he knew well for a few reasons.

Astrid's blue orbs widened in shock; she titled her head with her fingers pressed gently over the paper. Black drawings made from the finest squid ink marked over the pages while Hiccup's new (and correct) information danced around the areas that once held open space. Images of Toothless in mid-flight soared over still life's of him napping. One rough sketch Hiccup forgot to shade in showed a near-perfect bust of Toothless' head and his toothy jaws smiling back him.

Hiccup stifled a haughty grin after seeing her reaction.

"It'sâ€¦."

"That is the legendary Night Fury. The dragon species I take shape at night and Toothless is every day, all year long."

"The copy I had didn't have pictures of theâ€¦ Night Fury," she said the name as though she was testing it.

"This one didn't have illustrations either untilâ€¦" Hiccup hesitated after trailing off. Even when she already witnessed his drawing skills, the boy felt insecure.

"Until what?" she spoke in a way that wasn't meant to sound like a demand but Hiccup knew better.

"Until I drew them in.," he admitted. His shoulders slumped out of cheerlessness. He always drew representations people, places, or animals into his journals, but the Book of Dragons was the first and only time he placed them upon someone else's creation. Hiccup learned how to draw from his mother, but he felt self-conscious about not being good as she was. For all, he knew Astrid was probably offended that he damaged a valuable and irreplaceable piece of literature.

"They're good."

Hiccup blinked, staring in disbelief. She was not upset by his presumptuous act of vandalism.

"A lot better than the one you worked on in the dirt." She threw him a small grin. The girl recalled that memory with some form of fondness Hiccup could scarcely fathom.

"If I remember you had a hand in assisting me with that."

"Are you saying I'm a bad artist?"

"No! No, that's not what whyâ€¦" he groaned in annoyance. His

humiliation was amplified after hearing Astrid giggling.

"Yoo really are a strange one, Hiccup."

"Thanks, I appreciate that," his sardonic tone palpable. Eventually, with an hour before sunset, Astrid sincerely received the book from Hiccup, and he walked her through the front entrance (not before spying the frontal landscape for any police automobiles).

"Thank yoo fer letting me borrow the book," she said while adjusting her book bag.

Toothless was standing right behind her, sniffing the air until his pupils rotund in his docile excitement. He nudged the bag only just, but Astrid jumped back in surprise. The dragon paid no heed to her alarm as he stuck his long, pink tongue out and smiled his distinctive toothless grin.

"Uh, why is he looking at me like that?"

"\*\*She has another\*\*\_-saltyswimmys-\_"\*\*in that cloth carrying-thingy of hers."\*\*

Hiccup smiled halfhearted and rolled his eyes at the hungry dragon.

"He wants you to give up the other salmon that is still in your bag."

Astrid almost stumbled, which Hiccup assumed was from a loose stone on the floor when truthfully she was stunned.

"How do yoo know about the other one?"

"Toothless can smell it and I don't have to understand Dragonese to know he wants another fish."

\_Even though, I already do.\_ he thought to himself.

"But it's supposed tah be mah dinner." she whined.

Toothless made a long whimpering sound and rounded his eyes so well that he could have been mistaken for a little dog.

Oh, the begging face, how Hiccup detested that look. There were still times when he still fell victim to that façade.

Astrid sadly conceded too. "Okay fine. Here yoo go, Toothless." She pulled a large salmon from her bag, unraveling its transparent covering and threw the fish to the ground. Toothless bounded happily before slinking the silver scaled fish down his gullet.

"I apologize," Hiccup spoke earnestly to Astrid. "If I could pay for a new salmon for you I coul-"

Astrid raised a hand, signaling him to stop talking. "It's alright. They aren't that expensive, and I usually get a discount thanks to mah dad's shop."

"The fish bait shop?"

"Yep," Astrid replied in her usual way before going further and punched his shoulder. This time it felt less brutal than the last.

"Again with the punching."

"It's how I communicate with people."

\_I knew it. \_Hiccup thought, biting back a smile.

"So," she placed a strand of her hair behind her ear, temporarily turning away from Hiccup. She gave him another small smile before heading off. Astrid paused mid-step after walking halfway down the gravel path and asked, "Same time tomorrow?"

Hiccup felt his jaw slacken for a second before recovering. He smiled widely but said with a small hint of sarcasm, "I might have to pen you in between the hours of 4 o'clock and five but I shall see what I can do."

Astrid rolled her eyes good-naturedly before waving one time and walked away from his sight. Hiccup did not know how long he stood there at the spot until he realized sunset was fast approaching, and he needed to get back inside. His loyal, though sometimes disloyal, friend followed with his lips still smacking from the recent meal he devoured.

"\*\*You know what Hiccup?" \*\*Toothless spoke sometime later once Hiccup found the appropriately sized trousers to wear in his dragon form.

"\*\*Yes?" \*\*Hiccup lifted his head after staring at one pant leg to assure they were loosened enough. He gave his full attention to his friend while still sitting on his bed.

"\*\*I think maybe, perhaps things I thought I knew about humans\*\*\*\* could possibly be wrong. But don't quote on me with that." \*\*He added quickly in a manner that reminded Hiccup all too well of another friend he now had.

Hiccup smiled undoubtedly overjoyed from hearing the news.

Once Astrid would give the Book of Dragons back the first entry he will write will be how dragons\_ can\_ be persuaded after accepting the gift of fish.

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><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Not the best ending with a chapter that did nothing but this was seriously all I could write. I'm sorry.

\_\*\*ATTENTION NOTICE:\*\*\_\_ I am going back to school on SEPTEMBER 15, 2014. I will not know when I can update but I will try to work on my stories with the free time I have left from schoolwork. I hope you can all understand this.\_

\*\*(1) I love \*\*\_\*\*Harry Potter\*\*\_\*\* but I do not own my own personal copy of the magical books from that series. Maybe I'll ask for them



for my 20\*\*\*\*th\*\*\*\* birthday? XD \*\*

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 19. One for Sorrow

**\*\*Q-A: \*\***Here's chapter 19. Sorry it took so long to get here. This chapter's name was inspired by the old English poem that centered around an even older superstition. Let's just say there will be heavy foreshadowing coming.

**\*\*Disclaimer:\*\*** Nothing is mine (if it were HTTYD3 would still be coming out in 2016 and not 2017 as it has changed. XP)

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><p><strong>One for Sorrow<strong>

August 31st, 2010 (half hour before sunset)~

Though she started out feeling discontent before going in the castle, she came out in a better mood. The entirety of that Tuesday morning did not go in the direction Astrid liked with her book missing and Heather being interrogated. After all of that, Astrid needed to escape but at a place no one could find her. So, she went into the stone fortress again. Entering was the easy part though continuing to do so had been hard for her (unlike all the other times Astrid knew certainly what was beyond the grand wooden doors).

After properly befriending (read bribing) the black dragon-"\_\*\*Night Fury\*\*\_", \_Toothless is called a Night Fury," she would remind herself later-and gaining a different copy of the dragon book everything starting to turn out all right.

Walking back home was at a leisurely pace, until she noticed a familiar figure when she was passing the school gate.

"Gobber?" The old man waved his prosthetic hand in greeting. He walked forward until he reached where she stood. Astrid waited as she guessed he wanted to talk.

"Thought I wouldn't 'ave been able tah catch up with ya," he breathed heavily while hunching just a bit. Astrid was silently grateful that she was still young and healthy.

"Yer dad called me."

"Mah dad?"

"Well, that's what I jus' said," Gobber chuckled before turning serious. "He said that he wanted yoo tah drop yer school stuff at his shop. He said yoo need tah change from yer uniform into somethin' more casual when yoo head up fer the Bogs' place. Yer gonna be eating there ta'nite apparently."

Astrid stood there soaking up the message, meditatively. She didn't have too much to reflect over, but just to wonder what food Camicazi's mum would be cooking. The Hofferson girl was rather fond of the \_mince and tatties\_ Bertha made. **\*\*(1) \*\***She did though feel a

little unnerved by her dad's insistence on letting random people spread information around like they were messenger owls from \_Harry Potter\_. \_She planned on talking to him about the issue later.

After waving goodbye to Gobber (and thanking him for the heads up on her dad's message), she sauntered down the street in a three-minute walk. She understood why her father said to go straight to the bait shop instead of their home. The store was closer to the Bog home than the Hofferson residence. Soon she came to her father's store, cleverly named \_Berkenshire's Bait & Tackle Shoppe\_.

Astrid halted her walking to stare at the sign. She didn't remember there being an extra 'p' and 'e' in the name. And she knew the store had a tackier name than-

Flashes of light appeared in Astrid's vision. The old-fashioned picture was no longer present and replaced with all more familiar title, \_The Captured Cod\_ with the small caption underneath: \_For All Your Bait & Tackle Needs\_.

Astrid blinked multiple times, trying in vain to recapture the previously stylized text. With no proof of the odd text, Astrid assured herself it was a trick of the light. She fingered the set of keys in her pocket and walked up to the door.

The inside of the shop was thankfully spared from more images from a \_jakey \_state. **\*(2)** Astrid squinted in the dark as her hand blindly touched the wall to reach the light switch. Once the fluorescent lights turned on, the large rectangular room became visible. She spotted the recognizable flat display cases that contained buckets full of metal hooks, lines, and sinkers. Astrid went behind the store counter where the cash register stood though her main focus was on the broom closet from behind.

The closet was nothing more than storage for inventory. Shelves were full of small coolers filled with live bait. Halfbeaks, caterpillars, and freeze-dried frogs were stacked above and over each other. The latter, which constructed a foul smell that Astrid detested, but her casual wear was hanging inside, and she had no choice but to fish them out, pun sadly intended.

A woolen jumper and denim trousers greeted Astrid with a sense of familiarity. Red and white high-top trainers were beneath the bottom shelf, half-hidden away by her father's spare windbreaker. She slipped her black loafers and removed the rest of her uniform. The fabric was not drenched, but moisture could be felt. Astrid decided to hang her clothes next to the heater located outside of the closet. While grabbing the hanger in one hand and her mildly wet uniform in the other she pushed the previously unlocked door with her foot.

The moment she stepped back into the main room Astrid felt something in her bones. She heard a sound, somewhere, and twisted her head around in an effort to expand her hearing. It was faint, but she could hear the small noise.

Tapping. The tapping came from inside a metal storage cabinet. At first she wanted to believe it was similar to the light but Astrid knew better. She approached the cabinet, bravely treading to the metal doors. Her hand grazed over the handle. She twisted the inward latch up and once there was more than a gap between the door and

frame a small black blur to fly swiftly. Astrid nearly collided with the small bird but curved back far enough to miss it. Her eyes were trained on the fluttering creature as it cawed erratically at her. She recognized it immediately as a magpie for its head shape and beak, but there was something that differentiated from the ones she had seen before.

There were no traces of its white plumage anywhere.

"Chack-chack-chack! Chack-chack-chack!" the pure black magpie chirped shrilly before landing on the frame of the front door. Its unusually pale white eyes stared right through her, almost as if it were studying her with indifference.

Astrid forgot all about the uniform as her attention moved toward the magpie. The animal was probably startled just as much as she was and knew it wanted to be out in the woods again, or wherever magpies flocked to.

Still she was a little unnerved with the bird staring down at her. She even started to wonder if it was secretly a raven about to shout, "nevermore," over and over.

\_Get it together Astrid,\_ she reprimanded herself for acting so silly. \_This isn't a house, and the magpie isn't near any windows, so I'm fine. I'm fine. \_\*\*(3) \*\*It was foolish to remember such a superstition, by this rate she was going to end up like Gobber.

Astrid advanced warily, completely clueless on how to handle the bird (\_Oh, great Astrid. Yoo can touch a dragon just fine and climb on the back of a dragon-boy, but yoo can't figure out how to help a weird looking magpie\_, she thought sardonically) and tried lifting her hand to the door.

After the moment she unbolted the door, the black magpie swooped down from its perch above. It flew undulating in a stiff fashion cawing all the way before flying out into the night.

Astrid blinked several times before recomposing herself. She promptly locked the door after leaving the shop, deciding that if she ever brought up the magpie to her father, he had to put proper locks on the windows.

\* \* \*

><p>"Is somethin' the matter with mah clam chowder?"<p>

Astrid batted her eyes tiredly. She stared blankly at her bowl while lazily stirring the broth with her spoon.

"Sorry, I'm just a little tired," she protested weakly toward Bertha.

Her father sighed, shaking his head once in disapproval. The two Hoffersons were currently in the brightly lit dining room of the Bog home, sipping away the famous clam chowder that somehow lost its flavor to Astrid.

"Could be worse; something like limpets," Camicazi half-whispered affably, cleverly avoiding her mother attempting to thump the back of her daughter's head. Astrid's lip curled up slightly. The quip almost encouraged a smile out of her.

Dinner came and went without another disturbance thankfully. Camicazi told her mum and Astrid's dad that they were going to head to her bedroom for a bit to look over some homework. This left Astrid feeling suspicious. Cami was the sort of girl who'd wait until the last minute to do her work. How the hell she didn't fail her classes was still a mystery.

She got her suspicions answered in the form of a question. A question that she would have rather not been asked.

"Alright, so what's troublin' yoo? The only time people get quiet from mah mum's cookin' is when their mouths are too full of all the food." Cami stared at the taller blonde once they were in the safety of her messy room. Astrid did her best to look indifferent while her eyes darted around in her friend's room. The space certainly looked cluttered and unkempt it at least smelled clean, unlike the room that Ruff' shared with her brother. Still, the wheat bread spread with what Astrid guessed was Nutella on the floordid appear questionable.

"It's a boy." Astrid didn't want to lie to Cami. Her father insisted she needed to set an example to younger kids, even if they were nosy as Bog girl.

"It's not a boy is it?" Cami blanched a bit as if Astrid was contaminated with a disease.

"What? No," Astrid denied blatantly. "There's no boy involved."

"Well, I better hope so."

"Yoo seriously need tah get over the whole lurgi thing. Ruff' and Tuff' made that up to scare yoo."

"Doesn't stop the boys in our group from being idiots."

Astrid smirked slightly. "Well, yeah there's that."

"Then what's bothering yoo if it isn't a boy?"

"I'm not sure why yoo care all of the sudden."

"'Cause mah mum was there fer yer mum, why cannae be there fer yoo?"

Astrid felt her chest constrict for a moment before stiffening. She didn't need anyone doing favors for her.

"I already found someone tah help me with the journal," Astrid figured that at least letting that information out wouldn't be so bad. Cami was one of the few people Astrid could trust with sharing bits of information.

Cami held a surprised look for her friend before she furrowed her

eyebrows, skeptically. "Yoo have?"

"Yes, I met him a while back andâ€¦". She knew she was trouble after uttering the dreaded \_\*\*him\*\*\_.

"So there is a boy involved in all of this," Cami did all but shout.

"Yes, shush will ya?" Astrid made a lowering motion, requesting the Bog girl not to raise her voice.

"Oooh, he should be careful around me if I ever see him," Cami growled, pacing in a manner identical to an aggressive Night Fury.

"Yoo won't," Astrid recalled the countless time he insisted on never leaving his home to meet other people.

"He shouldn't try anythin' or say he's belter at sports or, or, somethin'." Astrid knew then Cami was just sputtering out insults and other abrasive remarks for the sake of it. Sometimes Astrid wondered if Camicazi liked hearing her self talk. That reminded her of Snotlout, grudgingly. Hearing him talk compelled her to react with violence.

At least in the few accounts she was with Hiccup the urge to punch him grew less and less. Hell, she even admit his presence was, to a small extent,

Correction: his company was \_decent\_. He at least didn't speak stupid sayings like 'Tuff' or stammer pointless information like Fishlegs \_or\_-thank god!-go on and on about how great she was along with the annoying flirtations like Snotlout did. She was very glad Hiccup did not try anything with her.

She stewed over these thoughts until a knock came from Cami's door. It was time for the Hoffersons to head off for home.

"Dinner was good ta'nite wasn't it," Erik inclined while he walked briskly to the bait shop.

Astrid shrugged, half-heartedly. The meal was fine as shellfishes could get around the island.

"The tatters were especially well made, Bertha musta bargained with Norbert strongly tah get the best ones."

Astrid hummed in acknowledgment, her eyes trained on the road ahead of her. Right now her mind was not on food.

"Bertha is skilled when it comes to cooking among other things. Astrid, fer the longest time I wanted tah ask-"

"Dad!" Astrid pointed ahead, her mouth agape. "Look at the shop!"

Erik's thoughtful demeanor dropped, quickly replaced with a look of horror. All around the bait shop were large words written in red pain

\_\*\*DON'T YOU BE OPENING BOOKS THAT SHOULD BE LEFT CLOSED~ \*\*\_

Erik and the slowly forming group of curious villagers were at a loss over what the message was conveying. Astrid, on the other hand, had a sudden suspicion.

"Who would've done this," was all her father said.

Clothes and magpies did not come across Astrid's mind that night, or for a long while after that.

\* \* \*

><p>Somewhere outside of the all the squabbling over the recent vandalism was truly happening inside. Closely tied was a place that at one point been called the seat of Berkenshire government, but it, over time, became the very source of its corruption. Inside an office filled only with the gaudiest of furniture and one incongruous fireplace carved from marble stood a large man and two shapes sitting. The man was pacing in such a way that his suit began to wrinkle. When one of the sitting forms lifted a finger to point out the flaw the man scowled and waved the hand away with a swift cut motion. If he had been any closer, he would have surely painfully slapped the limb away.<p>

"That was uncalled fer," the man finally spoke in his gruff drawl. The one who held their hand up flinched while other rapped long, bony fingers together.

"\*\*For\*\*," the bone-fingered one said in a tired raspy voice that squawked. "Speak like a civilized gentleman when you're around me," the voice showed signs of belonging to a lady's, if she cleaned her throat with steel wool for twenty years. "Not like the rest of those dobbers in town." A wheezing cough echoed through the shut-off room. No one else was in the building, but the man did not want to take any chances. "This village has gone downhill in the last hundred years."

"An' whose fault iz-is that?"

"Yours, well, most of the poor excuses in the family."

The man's face was hidden in the shadows, but the other two could feel his glare. "Like I was saying, I didn't ask for you to intervene that way."

"Would you rather I do it outside," the decrepit voice asked innocently.

"No! The last thing I need is for people to see your ghastly form."

"What do you expect me to do? Simply sit around all day while some floozy plays with the Haddock Spawn. Oh, don't act so shocked, I've my ways of learning the going-ons around this island."

The man shivered, trying to convince himself it was from the cold air and nothing else. "I don't want you saying that name in this manor. Who is that 'floozy' you just mentioned?"

"Who's father's shop did I ask to be given a warning?"

\_Hofferson, \_the man, thought bitterly. "Just like her uncle, always questioning things."

"We can do to her what we did to him when he started asking too many questions."

"That girl won't go anywhere near those cliffs," he sighed exasperatedly, "not after that night."

"Then ask our new helper if the Hofferson girl has anyâ€| weaknesses."

The man smirked, all his yellowed teeth showing. "Marvelous suggestion." He turned his attention, regarding the other person in the room. He and the elder gazed with ill intent visible in their eyes. "Well, little bird sing to us about, Ms. Hofferson."

The youth gasped for breath, wide eyes bulging from fear, wishing very hard that this was all a horrible, horrible nightmare that will eventually end.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>Duh, duh, DUHHN! I hide the mole from you and deny who it is. MUH-HAHAHA! â€| even though most of you might already have an idea who it is. But I'm not telling if you're right or not.

So this was new, an entirely different pov not from Astrid or Hiccup. What do you think? Should I do it again? I have plans for another certain-someone as homage to the very first HTTYD book if anyone remembers that. Anyway, for those of you who missed Hiccup in this chapter (a short chapter I might add, sorry) he will be in the next one along with our favorite useless reptile. :D Can't say anything more to spoil the surprises in store.

\*\*(1)\*\* Translation: minced beef with mashed potatoes or tatties, like how some people call them tatters, it's the same in Scotland too but with a different word.

\*\*(2) \*\*Being a \_jakey \_is a Scottish term to describe a person high off drugs. It's a good thing the rating on this fanfic is T.

\*\*(3) \*\*A Scottish superstition dictates that if someone saw a magpie sitting on a house's windowsill that would be an omen for deathâ€|. All old-timey premonitions were like that.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

## 20. Can't Take It In

\*\*Q-A: \*\*Like I promised, here's the chapter with Hiccup (and Toothless). I am very pleased with this one and there will be more world building. Yay! Did I mention I love writing the chapters with Toothless in them? XD I love incorporating his personality from the books into his movie counterpart. It's just so hilarious to me.

Anyone else remember \_The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe\_ soundtrack and \_Imogen Heap's \_amazing song \_Can't Take It In.\_ Somehow that has started to become a theme in this story for either Astrid or Hiccup since they both are jumping into parts unknown and the unfamiliar surroundings. Astrid 'seeing' things around the island and Hiccup discovering more of his suppressed dragon roots.

**\*\*Disclaimer: \*\***Once again I own nothing. Otherwise Hiccstrid would be more prominent on RttE.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Can't Take It In<strong>

August 31st, 2010 (far into the night with only dragon fire to light the way)

Sulfur and the natural dragon stench-mackerel heads and brackish seaweed-were proliferating in higher degrees than Hiccup was normally accustomed to in the tunnel system. After having gone through the peril erstwhile, Hiccup was lessâ€| terrified this time around. He remained close to his companion while the caves' occupants growled and jeered their way.

\_"\*\*"To\*\*\*\*o\*\*\*\*thless," \*\*\_Hiccup inquired while they were crawling through a narrow tunnel.

The dragon in question paused from his trundle long enough to acknowledge Hiccup with an animalistic grunt. \_\*\*"Yeah?"\*\*\_

\*\*\_"This has been bothering me for some time. I cannot fathom why the dragons here, as opposed to your friends, refer to you as the Dark One."\_\*\*

\*\*\_"If I recall they're calling you that too, Hiccup." \_\*\*

Hiccup sighed, rolling his silted eyes, \_\*\*"Oh, enlighten me on what prompted them to give us that particular appellation?"\*\*\_

\_"\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_Ugh,\_ big words." \*\*\_Toothless feigned a wince and avoided Hiccup swiping him with his shorter tail.

\_Infuriating reptile, \_Hiccup grimaced after shifting his body through twin stalagmites. There had to be a more fitting way for them to have an audience with Wodensfang. At an earlier time, Hiccup was preparing a modest supper of potato and onion soup alongside Astrid's gift of bread when Toothless barged in the banquet hall. The dragon insisted that he and the cursed human were to leave for the caves at once. Wondensfang requested their presence for a matter of great importance. As Hiccup was raised to respect his elders and follow protocol to a certain extent, he allowed Toothless to lead the way. On a more personal note, Hiccup was appreciative that Toothless was not forcibly hauling him this time.

In a little while, the two Night Furies arrived in the further recesses of the tunnels, near the very heart of the island. Through one narrow channel, the two were inside the wide, cavernous home



belonging to Wodensfang. There were no theatrics from the little dragon. No imposing mystery for secrets, small Terrible Terror-sized beast sat miniscule but proud.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Good evening," \*\*\_Hiccup greeted after following suit of Toothless' bow.

The smaller dragon had blinked his eyes before his thin lips stretched into a fully fanged smile.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*I welcome you to the cave once more, wandering\*\*\_  
\_greenblood\_ \*\*I hope your trek here was  
quaint."\*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Q\_uaint as traveling through a deadly cave system is,"  
\*\*\_Hiccup quipped, earning a scornful look from  
Toothless.

Wodensfang inclined his head to Toothless, implying he was not offended. \_\*\*"Pleasantries aside, there is a reason I called for your presence, Hiccup."\*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_What\_ for?" \*\*\_

Wodensfang calm demeanor from before abruptly changed. His wrinkly face became somber. \_\*\*"I know who you truly are, young Hiccup."  
\*\*\_

Completely stunned and aghast at what he heard, Hiccup instinctively panicked. Toothless crooned, nudging the cursed human with his nose.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Did\_ you know," \*\*\_Hiccup spoke low enough for Toothless to hear.

The Night Fury turned away in shame.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Do\_ not place blame on your friend, Hiccup." \*\*\_Wodensfang stood up and began to crawl to their direction. \_\*\*"I figured out the masquerade right away. Since your first visit, in fact," \*\*\_the dragon chuckled good-naturedly, \_\*\*"I could see your humanity from your stance, posture, and your appearance. Almost none of the dragons in these caves understands the difference between what is normal and abnormal. Believe when I say that your form does not unsettle me in the least bit. You are much a dragon as you are a human."\*\*\_

Hiccup frowned in dismay, blowing hot air through his nostrils. If only that were true. He was a monster. Even if his parents never said it directly to him, he knew what he was.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Now,\_ do not look so doubtful, Young One. All dragons at one time believed in the idea of Fate. We saw how it tied together bonds and broke them just as quickly. It is all part of the Grand Design and individual paths and perhaps one day becoming a Hero. I believe that you are Meant To Be on that path."\*\*\_

\*\*\*\*\*\_\*\*Me?" \*\*\_Hiccup could comprehend what he was hearing. He knew he was many things, but a hero was not one of them. A hero would not walk in the dead of night, hiding from villagers, to give a girl's ball back. A hero would never cower at the sight of a dark,

foreboding cave filled with deadly dragons. A hero would never lock the girl mentioned above in a tower out of fear of his life. A hero would be bold, courageous, and never back down from a challenge. Hiccup knew he carried none of the traits a hero possessed. Anyone who said otherwise was either delusional or cruel.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_You\_ still feel uncertain," \*\*\_Wodensfang stated, disappointedly. \_\*\*"What a pity, and tonight I was hoping to teach you what I taught Toothless during his stay here."\*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Wait,\_ teach me," \*\*\_Hiccup asked, astonished.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Yes,\_ didn't Toothless tell you of this before he brought you here?" \*\*\_

Hiccup took a gander over to Toothless and noticed the true Night Fury averting his gaze. The cursed-boy mouth unwillingly curved into a frown. "\_\*\*No."\*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Good, \_because I asked him to." \*\*\_Hiccup drew back his previous expression in mortification, taking an edge of his irritation. "\_\*\*Now, if we are to begin with your training you need to promise me that you will follow my teachings without questioning them."\*\*\_

If the request were given to a child born of the 21st Century, they would vehemently disagree. Hiccup, being the naïve person with no parental guidance to voice their opinions over the demand, gave his consent.

Toothless decided to be Hiccup's guardian and stepped in. Or, he wanted to brag about his accomplishments in training the purported hatchling.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_I've\_ been giving him a few lessons here and there. Namely the basics on keeping the wings straight for longer periods of gliding, reminding him to flap his wings less after takeoff, so he doesn't overexert himself."\*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_And making sure his wing tips touch each other at each flap?" \*\*\_Wodensfang held a curious look.

Toothless opened his mouth before closing it and then shook his head. \_\*\*"I might've forgotten that." \*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_I ha\_d some trouble with those sharp turns," \*\*\_Hiccup revealed, \_\*\*"Ever since I started practicing around two and a half centuries ago I could never maneuver quickly enough, before crashing into a wall or tree."\*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Yeah,\_ those poor trees never stood a chance." \*\*\_Toothless chortled. He remembered that the castle courtyard was practically an orchard before Hiccup started to fly.

Hiccup glowered at the Night Fury, clearly unamused.

Wodensfang remained neutral, familiar with aggressive dragons. He informally crawled over to Toothless and flew tiredly until reaching

the larger dragon's head. He leaned behind until his paw reached the top of the neck and began rubbing it in a circular pattern. Toothless crinkled his eyes and emitted a deep shudder. Slowly, the dorsal blades over his spine split apart and broaden until they formed a pair of two pronounced spine spikes over the back and tail.

Hiccup widened his eyes in awe. "Wow," he spoke in English.

Wodensfang gave the impression of perceiving Hiccup and smile with pride. \_\*\*"Every dragon has their secrets."\*\*\_ He leaped from Hiccup's shoulder and glided to the ground at a leisurely pace.\_\*\*"One that you and Toothless share is the spine."\*\*\_

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_I h\_ave them too?" \*\*\_Toothless gasped in surprise.

Hiccup arched a brow in amazement. \_I suppose Toothless is unaware of his hidden talents as I am.\_

Wodensfang nodded, and Hiccup assisted Toothless in replicating the same motions the elder dragon had done. The larger Night Fury soon bounded around, carrying a giddy expression while retracting and splaying his newfound blades repeatedly. Hiccup chuckled at the sight, both in amusement and joy at seeing his friend being happy.

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*You will need to leave soon," \*\*\_Wodensfang said, gaining the two younger dragons' attention. \_\*\*"Sunrise will be approaching within the hour."\*\*\_

Hiccup frowned. \_\*\*"But how did you-"\*\*\_

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_In \_time I will tell you more, Young One. But that will be for another lesson." \*\*\_Wodensfang inclined his head to Hiccup. \_\*\*"I will be looking forward to that night until then." \*\*\_

It was all feeling so strange and different for Hiccup. He never thought he would get to learn more about dragons from someone else besides Toothless. Wodensfang appeared to be a trustworthy fellow, his wisdom was helpful and a great asset for the Haddock Heir. However, there was still a thought plaguing his mind.

\*\*\_"If I may ask one more question from you?"\_\*\*

\*\*\_"Why yes, you may?"\_\*\*

\_\*\*"Why?"\*\*\_

Hiccup held inkling that Wodensfang already knew what Hiccup was implying. \_\*\*"Why what?"\*\*\_

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_Wh\_y did you wish to train me? I am not a true dragon, and yet you said I am Meant To Be a Hero? How am I supposed to become one?"\*\*\_

Wodensfang's frame stiffened while his yellowed eyes narrowed. He stared into Hiccup with such conviction that it made him speechless.

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_D\_ark storms are coming ahead. Right now they are already

brewing. Right as we speak someone is plotting your demise. The someone who is Meant to Be your undoing. A person who you will foolishly put your trust in and they will betray you."\*\*\_

Hiccup stared at the elderly dragon, absolutely transfixed at the warnings Wodensfang uttered. \_\*\*"How do you know all this?"\*\*\_

Wodensfang blinked, seemingly waking from a trance. \_\*\*"I am sorry what?"\*\*\_

Hiccup pursed his lips in confusion. He wanted to press on, but then Toothless prodded him toward the domed chamber's only tunnel.

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_Ehh\_h, don't mind him too much, Hiccup. Wodensfang is this nest's Alpha but his mind has gone a bit so-so overtime."\*\*\_

Hiccup faltered, and his rear leg almost collided with a rock. For a brief moment, he was wondering if he was speaking with Toothless or an imposter.

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_Is h\_e really the Alpha?"\*\*\_

Hiccup recalled a chapter in the Book of Dragons discussing the theory of dragon flocks following a pack leader. An Alpha, the first in the Greek alphabet, symbolic meaning of the first in the group to always lead and the rest would follow. Hiccup tried to visualize the tiny Wodensfang walking ahead with a hundred or so dragons trailing in his vicinity.

\*\*\*\*\_\*\*Yep, the oldest of us and wisest," \*\*\_Toothless said, acting as though it natural.\_\*\* "Though that might be a bit of a strong word there. Stormfly thinks his ramblings are visions of some sort but, Hookfang thinks it might be the fumes getting to Wodensfang."\*\*\_

Hiccup was slightly relieved he was not the only who questioned the regime.

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_And you?"\*\*\_

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_I follow him as best as I can." \*\*\_Toothless was silent for a moment before stretching his lips into a smile.\_\*\* "A Steward if you will, but over the past few decades Wodensfang started to become slower, and less active. Countless dragons have noticed this and tried challenging him the right to be Alpha. You would not believe how many of those annoying little\*\*\_Pesti Stings-(Nanodragons, Hiccup mentally deciphered)-\_\*\*wanted the title of Alpha and I had to fight in his stead. After a while, some of them wised up and left Wodensfang alone."\*\*\_

\_\*\*"\*\*\*\*\_Did any of them hurt you?" \*\*\_Hiccup frowned in concern for his friend.

Toothless grinned, showing his fangs. \_\*\*"Naw, they got more bruised than I did. Most of them were either Hookfang's kind and Spikey Sniffers. None of the Rock-Biters or Flint-Pukers, they tend to keep to themselves." \*\*\_

His catamount face drew a scowl, green eyes turning into slits.  
\_\*\*"There was this one Wurmy Rock-Biter kept wanting to fight me. He didn't want to be Alpha, just to egg me on. I eventually shut his whispering with a good bite to his side. That got him off my back."  
\*\*\_  
\_

Hiccup gave Toothless a frightened, open-mouthed stare. The cursed boy had seen his dragon friend act aggressive and wild before, but never learned of Toothless' past disputes with other dragons. Judging from Toothless' description, the fights sounded violent.

After a while they fell into a beat of silence, Hiccup thought, worriedly, for his friend's safety when his nose caught the scent of four familiar creatures. Toothless bellowed in greeting, bounding forward to where his dragon companions assembled.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_He\_y there, mates!"\*\_Toothless warbled in greeting.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Too\_thless, glad to see you show up, finally,"\*\_Stormfly said.

\_"\*\*"She was just annoyed you weren't here to settle Hookfang in his place when she couldn't,"\*\_Meatlug said in an attempt to play mediator. Except she was not one for the Monstrous Nightmare

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_Hey\_!" \*\*\_Hookfang growled.

The Hideous Zippleback head, belonging to Belch, stepped in, oblivious to the glowering Hookfang. \_\*\*"You would not believe what Barf and me found the other night." \*\*\_  
\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Another one of your cousins named Lug-wort," \*\*\_Toothless asked, uninterested.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*No, more sheep,"\*\_both heads cried out in unison.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Oh, great," \*\*\_Hiccup had only just forgotten that scarring memory, which was the bloodied remains of a sheep. \_\*\*"Where on this island do you keep finding them,"\*\_he asked, genuinely interested.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*\_J\_ust by the\*\*\_salty-water\_\*\*where Meatlug found her's," \*\*\_Stormfly answered.

Hiccup inwardly sighed in relief. \_Oh, good just as long as they didn't belong to a human.\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*What were you guys doing holed up in Wodensfang's place?"\*\_Hookfang eyed the two Night Furies with suspicion.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Uh," \*\*\_Hiccup felt unnerved at first until finding the words to say. \_\*\*"Just wanted to ask a few things. That's all."\*\_

\*\*\_"Weird and odd," \_\*\*was the cryptic response from the large red dragon.

\_\*\*\*\*\*Those mean the same thing," \*\*\_Stormfly argued.

\_\*\*\*\*\*Do I look like I care? I just find it strange that Wodensfang would want a word with this skinny newcomer who just showed up here out of nowhere." \*\*\_The yellow serpent eyes bored right into Hiccup's, nearly making the cursed boy faint on the spot.

\_\*\*\*\*\*Back off, Hookfang!" \*\*\_Toothless wise cut in between. \_\*\*  
"If you know what's good for you,"\*\*\_he unsheathed his sharp fangs while firmly keeping his ground

\_\*\*\*\*\*Do I," \*\*\_Hookfang did all but snarl. Hiccup watched in both shock and amazement. Everything about Hookfang's stance seemed stiff and obtuse, almost as if that was not him at all.

\*\*\_"Hookfang," \_\*\*Meatlug buzzed over them, whining in fear.  
\_\*\*"Remember your place."\*\*\_

Bad choice of words was all Hiccup thought before Hookfang swiped Toothless to the ground. Through the fire and the smoke all Hiccup could see were flashes of red and black in two reptilian shapes. The sounds of jaws snapping and fire-breathing forced Hiccup to leap away from the struggle. He read somewhere that being in the middle of a brawl between dragons was not a brilliant plan.

Stormfly, however, tried several times to break the two dragons apart but failed. Meatlug, Barf, and Belch whimpered to the side, muttering how they would either mourn for Toothless or Hookfang when this was all over.

Hiccup's eyes were burning from tears instead of the sulfur for once. He was not going to lose his dear oldest friend in such a pointless fight. Against his dragon instincts and better judgment, Hiccup channeled his unspent energy with a bright shot of blue fire.

"STOP!" Hiccup roared, louder than he would have dared shouted in all his life.

Miraculously, the shout did what the cursed boy had intended and ceased Toothless and Hookfang from their struggle. Instantly, their eyes reverted from slits to harmless round pupils, and each of them gasped for breath. Obviously fighting took a lot out of a person, current company included.

Toothless whimpered (not that he would ever admit to doing it) and waddled over to where Hiccup stood, giving a silent apology to the young dragon-boy.

Hookfang appeared more shaken as his eyes shifted around nervously, almost as though perturbed. \_\*\*"What did I do?"\*\*\_

\*\*\_"What do ya mean 'what did I do,'" \_\*\*Stormfly snapped while all her tail spikes flared angrily. She stood above the cowering Hookfang and began to berate him for his temper. Hiccup felt sympathy for the Nightmare momentarily, supposing that Hookfang was honest. No one could replicate fear the way Hookfang expressed. A moment later he felt his companion pulling at his arm with his gums. Hiccup followed Toothless on the ground. The Night Fury could not unfurl his wings

due to the pain he developed from the fight. Fortunately, there were no other deadly dragons around to challenge them. Hiccup was starting to fancy the idea that they were scared off by his roar when he remembered a question he wanted to ask Toothless.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*What was that all about?" \*\*\_

Toothless grunted while trying in vain to stretch out his wings. \_\*\*"Don't know. Hookfang is always full of hot air, but he hasn't acted out like that in ages. Something must be wrong. Loads of \*\*\_greenbloods \_\*\*here have been acting out at random. I noticed it when we got here."\*\*\_

\*\*\_"Should we tell Wodensfang?" \_\*\*Hiccup wondered if the cave's Alpha could settle the disputes.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*As Steward, I'll talk to him alone," \*\*\_Toothless said firmly, ignoring Hiccup's protests. \_\*\*"You can fly back to your place fine, right?"\*\*\_

Confounded, Hiccup tripped over his words, \_\*\*"Uh, if-if you think that's a good idea."\*\*\_

Toothless sighed. \_\*\*"I'm asking you if you can do it or not,"\*\*\_he said, his face growing soft before a slight smirk appeared. \_\*\*"Though it shouldn't be a problem now that you have those extra fins,\*\*\_

\*\*\*\*\*\_\*\*You sound more excited than me," \*\*\_Hiccup said teasingly.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Because they are bloody brilliant!"\*\*\_The Night Fury forgot the situation for a moment and jumped in the air in excitement. \_\*\*"I can't wait to test these babies out."\*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Sometimes I wonder if you and I are still speaking the same language."\*\*\_Hiccup stared blankly at the taller Night Fury before seeing the moonlight at the end of the tunnel.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Yeah, yeah, see ya later." \*\*\_

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Wait Toothless," \*\*\_the dragon stopped and turned around to hear Hiccup clearer. \_\*\*"Are you certain that you can go back in the cave with that wound?"\*\*\_

The dragon appeared aghast over what Hiccup asked and snorted with his usual arrogance.

\_"\*\*\*\*\*Like there is anyone in that cave that go toe-to-toe with a \*\*\_greenblood \_\*\*as mighty as I?"\*\*\_

After declaring the boast, Toothless went back inside with the sound of dragons biting and roaring was audible. Toothless' roar was the most prominent.

Hiccup inwardly shuddered while an updraft lifted him up in the air toward the safety of his castle home. He looked back once in worry of his headstrong but caring, friend.

\_I am very glad I am not a hero. If not, I would have to fight other

dragons the same way Toothless has to.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Q-A: <strong>If there is anything we've learned in the HTTYD universe is that temping fate is the last thing a sane person should do. Too bad no one ever told Hiccup that. So, what did you guys think of this chapter? I added the double fin trick from HTTYD2 in here, which will be important later on. Then again, a lot of what was mentioned here was layered with important stuff in the future. If you want to guess in your reviews, that's totally fine but don't try and spoil the plot points of previous chapters in case new readers are looking them up. I know because I've done that and you've done it too, don't deny it.

Okay, so next chapter we'll be heading back with Astrid and see how she and her dad are dealing with the 'vandalism' on their shop. How will Astrid's friends react and will it in anyway change the relationship (read unfortunately platonic XD) of Astrid and the beanpole?

â€|.

What? Did you think I was going to answer it for you? Sorry, wait until the next chapter guys.

Keep on Writin' and Rockin'

End  
file.